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Balzac
The Lily of the Valley

CENTRAL

Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

The Human Comedy

PROVINCIAL LIFE

VOLUME V

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R. de Los Rios. sculp.

THE GARDENS OF THE MAISON PAPION

After having made sure that nobody was looking, I nestled into this back like a child throwing itself upon its mother's bosom, and covered those shoulders with kisses whilst burying my head in them.

The woman gave a piercing cry.

The *Edition Définitive* of the *Comédie Humaine* by HONORÉ DE BALZAC, now for the first time completely translated into English.

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THE LILY OF THE VALLEY. IN ONE VOLUME.
TRANSLATED BY MAY TOMLINSON,
AND ILLUSTRATED WITH
FOUR ETCHINGS.

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THE LILY OF THE VALLEY

TO MONSIEUR J.-B. NACQUART, MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MEDICINE.

DEAR DOCTOR,—

Here is one of the most polished stones in the second stratum of a literary edifice slowly and laboriously constructed; I wish to inscribe it with your name, as much to thank the scholar who was once my salvation, as to honor the everyday friend.

DE BALZAC.

*

TO MADAME LA COMTESSE NATALIE DE MANERVILLE.

"I yield to your desire. The woman whom we love better than she loves us possesses the privilege of making us forget the rules of common sense at every turn. In order to escape the frown upon your brow, and to banish the pouting expression of the lips that are saddened by the slightest denial, we traverse long distances miraculously, we shed our blood, we waste the future. To-day, you want my past; here it is. Only, remember this, Natalie: in obeying you, I have had to trample upon inviolate reluctance. But why suspect the sudden long reveries that attack me sometimes in the height of happiness? Why show a spoilt woman's dainty wrath about a silence? Could you not laugh at the contradictions in my character without seeking the cause of them? Are there secrets in your heart which in order to win absolution, must needs have mine? In short, you have guessed it, Natalie, and perhaps it is best that you should know all. Yes, my life is overshadowed by a phantom, it appears vaguely at the least word that arouses it, it often stirs of itself above me. There are some

awful memories buried in the depths of my soul like those marine productions that are to be seen in calm weather, and that are thrown up by the storm-tides in fragments on the beach. Although the labor necessary for the expression of ideas may have restrained those former emotions which pain me so much when they are awakened too suddenly, if there are any outbursts in this confession that may wound you, remember that you have threatened me if I do not obey you; so do not punish me for having done your bidding. I would that my confidence might redouble your tenderness. Good-bye till to-night.

"FÉLIX."

To what tear-nurtured talent shall we some day be indebted for the most pathetic elegy, the description of the tortures silently endured by souls whose still tender roots only meet with sharp stones in the home soil, whose early foliage is torn by spiteful hands, whose blossoms are struck by the frost the moment they open? Who is the poet that will tell us the sufferings of a child whose lips have sucked a bitter breast, and whose smiles are quenched by the fierce light of a stern eye? The fiction that should represent these poor souls oppressed by the beings placed around them to encourage the development of their sensitiveness, would be the true history of my youth. What vanity could I offend, I, a new-born child? To what physical or moral disgrace did I owe my mother's coldness? Was I then the child of duty, whose birth is accidental, or whose ex-

istence is a reproach? Put out to nurse in the country, forgotten by my family for three years, when I returned to the paternal home, I was of so little account that I excited the compassion of the servants. I do not know what feeling or what happy chance helped to raise me from this early ostracism; with me, the child was unconscious and the man knows nothing. Far from softening my lot, my brother and my two sisters amused themselves by making me suffer. The compact in virtue of which children conceal their peccadilloes, and which first teaches them honor, went for nothing as regards myself; moreover I often found myself punished for my brother's faults, without being able to protest against this injustice; could it be that toadyism, which is implanted in all children, prompted them to contribute to the persecutions that tormented me so as to ingratiate themselves with a mother whom they likewise dreaded? was it the result of their tendency to imitation? was it the desire to try their power, or was it their lack of pity? It may be that these causes combined deprived me of the comforts of fraternity. Already disinherited of all affection, I could not love anything, and Nature had made me a lover! Does an angel gather the sighs of ceaselessly rebuffed sensitiveness? If in some hearts slighted feelings turn to hate, in mine they concentrated themselves and there hollowed themselves a bed where, later on, they gushed forth upon my life. According to the character, the habit of trembling relaxes the fibres, engenders fear, and fear neces-

sitates submission. Thence comes a weakness which degenerates the man and imparts to him an indescribable something of the slave. But these continual troubles accustomed me to display a command which increased with exercise and predisposed my mind to moral resistance. In constant expectation of some fresh sorrow, like the martyrs awaiting fresh blows, my whole being was necessarily expressive of a dull resignation beneath which the graces and impulses of childhood were stifled, an attitude which passed for a symptom of idiocy and justified my mother's sinister prognostications. The conviction of this injustice prematurely filled my mind with pride, the offspring of reason, which doubtless checked the evil propensities that such a training was encouraging. Although forsaken by my mother, I was sometimes the object of her scruples, sometimes she would talk about my education and would evince a desire to attend to it; horrible shivers would then thrill me in thinking of the anguish that daily contact with her would cause me. I blessed my neglect, and thought myself lucky to be able to stay in the garden playing with pebbles, watching insects, and looking at the blue of the heavens. Although loneliness must have inclined me to reverie, my taste for contemplation came from an adventure which will give you a picture of my early misfortunes. I was of so little account that the governess often forgot to put me to bed. One evening, quietly crouched under a fig-tree, I was gazing at a star with that eager passion which over-

comes children, and to which my precocious melancholy added a kind of sentimental understanding. My sisters were playing and screaming; I could hear their distant clamor like an accompaniment to my ideas. The noise ceased, night fell. By chance, my mother remarked my absence. In order to escape blame, our governess, a terrible Mademoiselle Caroline, justified my mother's fictitious apprehensions by declaring that I abhorred the house; that, did she not watch me very carefully I should already have run away; I was not imbecile, but cunning; amongst all the children entrusted to her care, she had never met with any whose disposition were as bad as mine. She pretended to look for me and called me, I answered; she came to the fig-tree where she knew me to be.

"What were you doing there?" she said.

"I was looking at a star."

"You were not looking at a star," said my mother, who was listening to us from her balcony, "does a child of your age know astronomy?"

"Ah! madame," cried Mademoiselle Caroline, "he has turned on the tap of the reservoir, the garden is flooded."

There was a general uproar. My sisters had amused themselves turning the tap to see the water run; but, surprised by the spreading of a jet that had watered them on all sides, they had lost their heads and run away without having been able to shut off the tap. Caught and convicted of having planned this mischief, and accused of lying when

I affirmed my innocence, I was severely punished. But, terrible chastisement! I was quizzed about my love for the stars, and my mother forbade me to stay in the garden at night. Tyrannical prohibitions stimulate a passion in children even more than in men; children have the advantage over them of thinking only of the forbidden thing, which then presents irresistible attractions. So I often suffered a whipping for the sake of my star. Not being able to confide in anybody, I used to tell it my sorrows in that delicious inward prattle with which a child lisps, its first ideas as it once lisped its first words. At the age of twelve, when at college, I still contemplated it with indescribable delight, so deeply traced upon the heart are the impressions received in the dawn of life.

Charles, who was five years older than I, was as lovely as a child as he is handsome as a man; he was my father's favorite, my mother's darling, the hope of the family, therefore the lord of the house. Well-made and vigorous, he had a tutor. I, puny and feeble, was sent as a day-boarder to a school in the town, escorted there in the morning and brought back at night by my father's valet. I used to go off carrying a meagrely furnished hamper, whilst my schoolfellows brought abundant provisions. The contrast between my deprivation and their plenty gave rise to untold sufferings. The famous "*rillettes*" and "*rillons*" of Tours formed the chief element of the meal we took in the middle of the day, between the morning déjeuner and the house dinner which was

served when we went in again. This preparation, so much prized by some epicures, rarely appeared on aristocratic tables in Tours; if I had heard it mentioned before being sent to school, I had never been so lucky as to have seen this brown preserve spread upon a slice of bread for me; but even had it not been in fashion at school, my longing would have been none the less keen, for it had become, as it were, a fixed idea, like the desire with which the stews cooked by the portress inspired one of the most elegant duchesses in Paris, and which, woman-like, she gratified. Children divine covetousness in the glance just as well as you can read love; so I then became an excellent subject for mockery. My schoolfellows, who nearly all belonged to the smaller tradesmen's class, used to come and show me their excellent *rillettes* while asking me if I knew how they were made, where they were sold, and why I did not have any. They would lick their lips whilst praising the *rillons*, those remnants of pork fried in its own fat and resembling cooked truffles; they would clear out my basket, finding nothing in it but some Olivet cheeses, or some dried fruits, and would plague me with a "Then you have nothing to eat?" which taught me to compare the difference made between my brother and myself. This contrast between my abandonment and the happiness of others has soiled the roses of my childhood, and withered my verdant youth. The first time that, deceived by a generous feeling, I put out my hand to accept the long coveted dainty which was offered to me with a hypocritical

expression, my hoaxer drew back his slice, to the glee of the schoolfellows who had been forewarned of this issue. If the most eminent minds are accessible to vanity, how is it not possible to forgive the child who cries at seeing himself despised and jeered at? At this game, how many children would have become gluttons, beggars, cowards! To avoid persecution, I fought. The courage of despair rendered me formidable, but I was an object of hatred, and was helpless against treachery. One night, going home, I was struck in the back with a handkerchief full of stones. When the valet, who avenged me with violence, informed my mother of this incident, she cried: "That wretched child will give us nothing but trouble!"

I was filled with a horrible distrust of myself at finding there the same repulsion that I inspired in my family. There, as at home, I retired within myself. A second fall of snow checked the flowering of the seeds sown in my heart. I saw that those who were beloved were thorough rogues, my pride relied upon this observation; I dwelt alone. And so continued the impossibility of giving vent to the feelings that swelled my heart. Seeing me always gloomy, hated and solitary, the master confirmed the erroneous suspicions of my family as to my evil nature. As soon as I could read and write, my mother had me banished to Pont-le-Voy, a college directed by Oratorians, who admitted children of my age into a class called the class of the *Pas latins*, where were also the scholars whose back-

ward intelligence resisted the rudiments. I remained there eight years, without seeing a soul, and leading the life of an outcast. This is how and why. I only had three francs a month pocket-money, a sum barely covering the pens, pen-knives, rulers, ink and paper with which it had to supply us. And so, being unable to buy either the stilts, whipcord or any of the things necessary for the college amusements, I was banished from the games; to have been admitted I should have had to fawn upon the rich, or flatter the stronger members of my division. The least of those acts of cowardice that children so readily indulge in, made my heart bound. I would remain under a tree, lost in mournful reveries, or reading the books that were distributed to us monthly by the librarian. What grief was hidden beneath this stupendous solitude! what anguish was bred by my neglect! Imagine what my sensitive soul must have felt at the first distribution of prizes, when I won the two most coveted, the prize for essays, and that for translation! Upon ascending the platform to receive them, in the midst of acclamations and flourishes, I had neither father nor mother to care about me, whilst the audience was filled with the parents of all my schoolfellows. Instead of kissing the distributor, according to custom, I flung myself onto his breast and burst into tears. That night I burnt my wreaths in the stove. The parents stayed in town for the week devoted to the exercises that preceded the distribution of prizes, and so my schoolfellows all decamped joyfully every morning; whilst

I, whose parents were a few miles away, remained in the courtyards with the *outre-mer*, the name given to those scholars whose families were in the West Indies or abroad. In the evening, during prayers, the barbarians boasted to us about the good dinners they had had with their parents. You will always see my misery increasing in proportion to the circumference of the social spheres I entered. How many efforts have I not made to annul the sentence which condemned me to live only within myself! how many hopes long conceived with a thousand yearnings of soul, and destroyed in a day!

In order to persuade my parents to come to the college, I wrote them letters full of feeling, perhaps affectedly expressed, but ought these letters to have excited the reproaches of my mother, who reproved me ironically for my style? Without being discouraged, I promised to fulfil the conditions imposed by my mother and father for their arrival; I implored the presence of my sisters, to whom I used to write for their saint-days and birthdays, with the punctuality of poor deserted children, but with fruitless persistence. As the time approached for the distribution of prizes, I renewed my entreaties, I spoke of my presentiment of triumphs. Deceived by the silence of my parents, I was expecting them with enthusiasm, I told my schoolfellows of their coming; and when, upon the arrival of the families, the step of the old porter who called the scholars re-echoed in the courtyard, I then endured sickening palpitations. The old man never mentioned my

name. The day upon which I owned to having cursed existence, my confessor pointed to the sky where blossomed the palm promised by the Saviour's *Beati qui lugent!* At the time of my first communion, I threw myself into the mysterious depths of prayer, captivated by the religious ideas whose moral magic enchants youthful minds. Fired by ardent faith, I prayed God to repeat in my behalf the fascinating miracles that I used to read of in the Martyrology. At five years old, I flew up to a star; at twelve, I went knocking at the portals of the sanctuary. My ecstasy produced within me indescribable dreams that stocked my imagination, enriched my tenderness and invigorated my thinking faculties. I have often attributed these sublime visions to angels charged with fashioning my soul to some divine destiny; they have endowed my eyes with the power of seeing the inmost meaning of things; they have prepared my heart for the witchery which makes the poet miserable when he possesses the fatal power of comparing what he feels to what is, the great things striven for to the little gained; they have written a book in my head in which I have been able to read what I had to express, they have furnished my lips with the improvisor's charcoal.

My father entertained some doubts as to the extent of the Oratorian teaching, and came to remove me from Pont-le-Voy to place me in an institution in Paris situated in the Marais. I was fifteen years old. Examination having been made of my capacity,

the rhetorician of Pont-le-Voy was judged worthy of being put in the third form. The sufferings I had experienced at home, at school and at college I was to meet again under a fresh guise during my sojourn at the pension Lepître. My father had given me no money. When my parents found that I could be fed, clothed, crammed with Latin, stuffed with Greek, all was solved. During the course of my college life, I have known about a thousand fellow-students, and have never met with any example of such indifference. Monsieur Lepître, fanatically attached to the Bourbons, had had relations with my father at the time that some devoted royalists attempted to remove queen Marie-Antoinette from the Temple ; they had renewed their acquaintance, so Monsieur Lepître considered himself obliged to make up for my father's forgetfulness, but the sum which he gave me monthly was moderate, for he was not aware of my family's views. The school was established in the old hôtel Joyeuse, where, as in all old seigneurial residences, there was a porter's lodge. During the recreation preceding the hour at which the ushers escorted us to the Charlemagne lyceum, the wealthy students went to breakfast at the porter's, a man called Doisy. Monsieur Lepître either ignored or tolerated the business carried on by Doisy, a regular smuggler, whom it was to the interest of the pupils to make much of ; he was the secret chaperon of our rambles, the confidant of late returns, our medium with the agents of forbidden books. Breakfast of a cup of *café au lait* was an

aristocratic taste accounted for by the exorbitant price to which colonial produce rose under Napoléon. If the use of sugar and coffee constituted a luxury with the parents, with us it indicated a vainglorious superiority which would have encouraged our passion, even if the propensity to imitation, greediness, and the contagion of fashion had not sufficed. Doisy gave us credit, assuming that we all had sisters or aunts who approve of the point of honor of scholars and pay their debts. For a long time I resisted the allurements of the coffee-house. Had those who judged me known the force of the seductions, my soul's heroic aspirations to stoicism, the fits of subdued rage during my long resistance, they would have dried my tears instead of causing them to flow. But, child as I was, how could I be possessed of that largeness of mind that despises the scorn of others? Then perhaps I was conscious of the temptations of several social vices, the strength of which was increased by my longing.

Toward the end of the second year, my father and mother came to Paris. The day of their arrival was announced to me by my brother: he lived in Paris and had never paid me a single visit. My sisters were of the party, and we were to see Paris together. The first day, we were to dine at the Palais-Royal so as to be handy to the Théâtre-Français. In spite of the intoxication produced by this programme of unexpected festivities, my joy was damped by the storm that so quickly affects those accustomed to misfortune. I had to confess

the debt of a hundred francs contracted with the Sieur Doisy, who threatened to demand the money himself from my parents. I contrived to make my brother the ambassador for Doisy, the interpreter of my penitence, and the mediator for my pardon. My father was inclined to be indulgent. But my mother was pitiless, her dark blue eye petrified me, she burst out with terrible prophecies. "What should I be later, if, at seventeen I was up to such tricks? Could I really be her son? Was I going to ruin my family? Was I the only one at home? Did not my brother Charles's profession require a separate endowment, already earned by behavior that did honor to his family, whilst I was to be the shame of it? Were my two sisters to marry without dowry? Was I ignorant of the value of money, and of what I cost? Of what use were sugar and coffee in an education? To behave in this way, was it not to become initiated into all vices? Marat was an angel compared to me.

When I had endured the shock of this torrent, which conveyed a thousand terrors to my mind, my brother took me back to school; I lost the dinner at the *Freres-Provençaux* and was deprived of seeing Talma in *Britannicus*. Such was my interview with my mother after a separation of twelve years.

*

When I had finished my classical studies, my father left me under the tutelage of Monsieur Lepître; I was to learn the higher mathematics, read law for a year and begin a course of classical study. I believed, as a parlor-boarder and exempt from classes, that there would be a truce between misery and me. But, in spite of my nineteen years, or perhaps on account of them, my father continued the system which had sent me to school in times gone by with insufficient victuals, to college without pocket-money, and given me Doisy as a creditor. I had very little money at my disposal. How attempt anything in Paris without money? Besides, my liberty was skilfully fettered. Monsieur Lepître had me escorted to the law schools by an usher who handed me over to the professor, and came to fetch me again. A young girl would have been guarded with less precaution than was suggested for the care of my person by my mother's fears. My parents had good cause to dread Paris. Students are secretly occupied with the same thing that absorbs young girls in their boarding-schools; in spite of everything, the latter will always talk about lovers, and the former about

women. But, in Paris, and at that time, conversation between schoolfellows was influenced by the oriental and sultanesque world of the Palais-Royal. The Palais-Royal was an Eldorado of love, where, at night, ingots slipped away ready coined. There the most virginal scruples vanished, there our inflamed desires could be appeased! The Palais-Royal and I, we were two asymptotes verging one toward the other without being able to meet. This is how fate thwarted my attempts. My father had introduced me to one of my aunts who lived on the isle of Saint-Louis, where I had to go and dine on Thursdays and Sundays, conveyed by Madame or Monsieur Lepître, who, on those days, used to go out and pick me up at night on their way home. Strange recreation! The Marquise de Listomère was a ceremonious *grande dame* who would never have thought of offering me a penny. Ancient as a cathedral, painted like a miniature, gorgeous in her attire, she lived in her mansion as if Louis XV. were not dead, and she saw no one but old women and noblemen, a company of fossilized creatures amongst whom I felt as if I were in a cemetery. Nobody spoke a word to me, and I felt I had not the courage to speak first. The inimical or chilly looks made me ashamed of my youthfulness, which seemed annoying to them all. I based the success of my escapade upon this indifference, by resolving to steal away one day, as soon as dinner was finished, so as to fly to the *Galeries de Bois*. Once deep in whist, my aunt never paid me any further attention.

Jean, her valet, paid but little attention to Monsieur Lepître ; but this miserable dinner was unfortunately prolonged on account of the antiquity of the jaws or the imperfection of the teeth.

At last, one evening, between eight and nine o'clock, I had got as far as the staircase, palpitating like Bianca Capello on the day of her flight ; but, when the porter opened the gate for me I saw Monsieur Lepître's cab in the street, and the old man asking for me in his wheezy voice. Three times did chance interpose fatally between the hell of the Palais-Royal and the paradise of my youth. The day upon which, feeling ashamed of being so ignorant at twenty years old, I resolved to brave all perils to put an end to it ; just as, giving the slip to Monsieur Lepître as he was getting into his carriage—a difficult operation, he was as fat as Louis XVIII. and club-footed !—well, my mother arrived in a post-chaise ! Her look stopped me and I stood like a bird before a snake. By what chance had I met her ? Nothing more natural. Napoléon was venturing his last stroke. My father, foreseeing the return of the Bourbons, had come to cast an eye upon my brother, who was already employed in imperial diplomacy. He had left Tours with my mother. My mother had undertaken to fetch me home to shelter me from the dangers which seemed to be threatening the capital according to those who were intelligently following the progress of the enemy. In a few minutes I was carried away from Paris, just as my continuance there was about to become

fatal to me. The torments of an imagination ceaselessly disturbed by suppressed longings, the worries of a life saddened by constant privation, had compelled me to take refuge in study, as men, weary of their lot once used to shut themselves up in a monastery. With me, study had become a passion which might be fatal to me by imprisoning me at a period in which young men ought to give themselves up to the delightful activities of their youthful nature.

This slight sketch of a youth in which you will find innumerable elegies was necessary in order to explain the influence it exercised upon my future. Affected by so many morbid elements, at twenty and more I was still small, thin and pale. My mind, full of determination, was struggling with a body apparently feeble, but which, according to the saying of an old doctor at Tours, was undergoing the last fusion of an iron constitution. Childish in body and old in mind, I had read and meditated so much that metaphysically I knew life in its heights just as I was about to find out the tortuous difficulties of its defiles and the sandy paths of its plains. Unheard of chances had left me in that delicious period when the first tumults of the soul arise, when it awakens to voluptuousness, when it finds everything sapid and fresh. I was between my puberty prolonged by my studies and my virility, that was tardily shooting forth its green branches. No young man was ever better prepared than I was to feel and love. In order to thoroughly understand my

story, you must look back to that beautiful age when the mouth is pure of lies and the glance frank, although veiled by eyelids weighted by diffidence at variance with desire, when the mind does not comply with the jesuitism of society, when the heart's cowardice is as strong as the generosity of early impulse.

I will not tell you about the journey I took with my mother from Paris to Tours. The coldness of her manner repressed the impulse of my affection. Upon leaving each fresh stage, I determined to speak; but a look, a word, scared away the sentences discreetly contemplated as a beginning. At Orleans, just as we were going to bed, my mother reproached me for my silence. I threw myself at her feet, I kissed her knees whilst weeping bitterly, I opened my heart that was bursting with affection; I tried to touch her with the eloquence of an appeal that was starving for love, the accents of which would have stirred the pity of a step-mother. My mother replied that I was making myself ridiculous. I complained about her neglect, she called me an unnatural son. I felt such a terrible pang, that at Blois I ran on to the bridge to throw myself into the Loire. My suicide was prevented by the height of the parapet.

Upon my arrival, my two sisters, who did not know me at all, displayed more astonishment than tenderness; and yet, later on, in comparison, they seemed to me to be full of kindliness toward me. I was put in a room on the third story. You will un-

derstand the extent of my misery when I tell you that my mother left me, a young man of twenty, without any other linen than that in my miserable school outfit, without any other wardrobe than my Paris clothes. If I flew from one end of the salon to the other to pick up her handkerchief for her, she would only give me the cold thanks that a woman addresses to her footman. Driven to examining her to find out if there were any soft spot in her heart to which I might attach some shoots of affection, I saw her to be a tall, thin, dry woman, managing, selfish, impertinent like all the Listomères, with whom impertinence was included in the dowry. She saw nothing in life but the fulfilment of duties; all the cold women whom I have met, like her, made a religion of duty; she received our adoration as a priest receives the incense at mass; my elder brother seemed to have absorbed the little maternity in her heart. She was constantly stinging us with shafts of cutting irony, the weapon of heartless people, and which she employed against us, who could answer her nothing. In spite of these thorny barriers, instinctive feelings hold by so many roots, and the religious terror inspired by a mother whom it costs too much to provoke, preserves so many bonds, that the sublime error of our love continued until the day, when, later on in life, she was supremely judged. Then begins the retaliation of the children; their indifference, begotten by the deceptions of the past, magnified by the slimy dregs that they can recall, extends even to the grave.

This terrible despotism dispelled the voluptuous ideas that I had madly dreamed of satisfying at Tours. I flung myself hopelessly into my father's library, where I set to work to read all the books that I did not know. My long sittings at work spared me all contact with my mother, but they aggravated my moral condition. Sometimes my eldest sister, the one who has married our cousin the Marquis de Listomère, tried to comfort me without being able to soothe the irritation of which I was the victim. I wanted to die.

Great events, with which I was unacquainted, were then brewing. Having left Bordeaux to rejoin Louis XVIII. in Paris, the Duc d'Angoulême, on his way through each town, was receiving ovations prepared in the enthusiasm which seized ancient France upon the return of the Bourbons. La Touraine all astir for her lawful princes, the town in an uproar, the windows decked with flags, the inhabitants in Sunday clothes, the preparations for a holiday, and an indescribable something in the air that intoxicates, gave me a longing to be present at the ball given to the prince. When I had summoned up enough courage to express this desire to my mother, who was then too ill to take part in the fête, she was greatly incensed. Had I just come from Congo that I was so ignorant? How could I imagine that our family would not be represented at this ball? In the absence of my father and my brother, was it not my place to go? Had I not a mother? did she not think of the happiness of her children? In one mo-

ment, the half disowned son became a somebody. I was as much bewildered at my importance as at the deluge of ironically deducted reasons with which my mother greeted my request. I questioned my sisters and learned that my mother, who delighted in these surprises, was exerting herself about my dress. Overwhelmed by the demands of his customers, no tailor in Tours was able to undertake my equipment. My mother sent for her workwoman who, following the custom of the provinces, knew how to do all sorts of needlework. A passably-fitting light blue coat was secretly made for me. Silk stockings and new pumps were easily found; as men's waistcoats were being worn short, I was able to put on one of my father's; for the first time I had a frilled shirt with gauffers that inflated my chest and entangled themselves in the bow of my tie. When I was dressed, I resembled myself so little that the compliments of my sisters gave me courage to appear before the Touraine assembly. It was an arduous undertaking! This fête admitted too many of the called to allow of the presence of many of the chosen. Thanks to the slightness of my figure, I slipped under a tent erected in the gardens of the Maison Papion, and made my way close to the armchair in which the prince was enthroned. In a moment I was suffocated by the heat, dazzled by the lights, the scarlet hangings, the gilt decorations, the dresses and diamonds of the first public fête that I had ever attended. I was pushed about by a crowd of men and women who were rushing and jostling one

another in a cloud of dust. The zealous brass instruments and Bourbonic outbursts of the military band were stifled by the hurrahs of "Vive le Duc d'Angoulême! vive le roi! vivent les Bourbons!" This fête was a whirl of enthusiasm in which each one tried to out-do the other in fierce eagerness to pursue the rising sun of the Bourbons, a regular party egotism that left me unmoved, humbled me, and caused me to retire within myself.

Carried away like a straw in this whirlwind, I felt a childish longing to be the Duc d'Angoulême, and to mingle thus with these princes who were parading before a wondering public. The foolish emulation of the Tourangean gave rise to an ambition that my temperament and the circumstances ennobled. Who has not envied that adoration, a grand repetition of which I saw some months later, when the whole of Paris rushed to meet the Emperor upon his return from the island of Elba?

This influence over the masses, whose feelings and vitality find vent in one person alone, suddenly consecrated me to fame, that priestess who slaughters the French of to-day, as the druidess once sacrificed the Gauls. Then, all of a sudden, I met the woman who was to ceaselessly rouse my ambitious longings, and gratify them by thrusting me into the heart of royalty.

Too shy to seek a partner, and moreover, fearing to upset the figures, I naturally became very cross and uncertain as to what to do with myself. Just as I was enduring the inevitable crush of a crowd, an

officer trod upon my feet which were as much swollen by the pressure of the leather as by the heat. This last annoyance disgusted me with the fête. It was impossible to get out, so I took refuge in a corner, on the end of a deserted bench, where I remained, staring before me, motionless and sulky. A lady, deceived by my weakly appearance and taking me for a sleepy child waiting his mother's good pleasure, placed herself close to me with the movement of a bird lowering itself into its nest. And then I inhaled a feminine fragrance that burnt into my soul as Eastern poetry has since done. I looked at my neighbor, and was more dazzled by her than I had been by the fête; she became all my fête. If you have thoroughly grasped my preceding life, you will be able to imagine the feelings that welled up in my heart. My eyes were suddenly struck by the plump white shoulders upon which I should have liked to rest, slightly rosy shoulders that seemed to be blushing as if they were bared for the first time, chaste shoulders that had a soul, and whose satin skin shone in the light like some silken tissue. These shoulders were divided by a line along which ran my glance, bolder than my hand. I raised myself up, thrilling all over to see the bust, and was completely fascinated by a throat modestly covered with gauze, but whose azured, perfectly-rounded globes lay delicately reposing in clouds of lace. The slightest details of this head were attractions that awakened infinite delight within me; the glitter of the hair smoothed above a neck

as velvety as a little girl's, the snowy lines traced by the comb and in which my imagination rambled as in fresh pathways, all combined to make me lose my senses. After having made sure that nobody was looking, I nestled into this back like a child throwing itself upon its mother's bosom, and covered those shoulders with kisses whilst burying my head in them.

The woman gave a piercing cry, which was drowned in the noise of the band, turned round, saw me, and said:

"Monsieur — !"

Ah! had she said: "My little fellow, whatever possesses you?" I might perhaps have killed her; but at this *monsieur!* hot tears gushed from my eyes. I was petrified by a glance glowing with righteous anger, by a sublime head crowned with a diadem of pale-yellow hair, in keeping with that soft back. Her face was flaring with the purple of outraged modesty, already half disarmed by the forgiveness of the woman who understands frenzy when she is the cause of it, and recognizes boundless adoration in the tears of the penitent. She walked away with a queenly movement. I then became conscious of the ridiculousness of my position; then only, I understood that I was as absurdly dressed as a Savoyard's monkey. I was ashamed of myself. I remained, all stupefied, relishing the apple I had just stolen, my lips still retaining the warmth of the blood I had inhaled, following this Heaven-sent woman with my eyes. Overwhelmed by the first

sensual phase of the heart's great fever, I wandered through the ball-room, now a desert to me, without being able to discover my *incognita*. I went home to bed transformed.

A new soul, a soul with many-colored wings, had burst its larva. My beloved star, fallen from the blue steppes where I had admired it, had turned into a woman while preserving all its clearness, sparkle, and freshness. Knowing nothing of love I was all of a sudden in love. Is it not a strange thing, this first outbreak of the keenest feeling in man? I had met several pretty women in my aunt's salon, not one of whom had made the least impression upon me. Is there then an hour, a conjunction of stars, a reunion of distinct circumstances, one particular woman among others, that determines an exclusive passion at a time when passion embraces the entire sex? At the thought that my elected lived in Touraine, I inhaled the air with delight. I discovered a color in the blue of the sky that I had never seen in it anywhere else. Though I was mentally enraptured, I appeared to be seriously ill, and my mother was anxious and half remorseful. Like animals that feel the approach of evil, I used to go and crouch in a corner of the garden to dream of the kiss I had stolen.

A few days after this memorable ball, my mother attributed the neglect of my studies, my indifference to her crushing looks, my heedlessness of her sarcasms, and my gloomy attitude, to the crises natural to young men of my age. The country, that eternal

remedy for complaints of which medicine has no knowledge, was looked upon as the best means of rousing me from my apathy. My mother decided that I should go and spend a few days at Frapesle, a château on the Indre, between Montbazon and Azay-le-Rideau, with one of her friends, to whom she doubtless gave secret instructions. The day upon which I was thus given my liberty, I had been swimming so rapidly through the ocean of love, that I had traversed it. I was unacquainted with the name of my unknown; how was she to be described? where was she to be found? moreover, to whom could I speak about her? The timidity of my disposition still further aggravated the unaccountable apprehensions that take possession of youthful hearts at the outset of love, and started me off with the melancholy that is the conclusion of hopeless passions. I asked nothing better than to come and go, and roam through fields. With that childish courage that stops at nothing and contains an indescribable chivalry, I determined to ransack the châteaux of Touraine, travelling on foot, and saying to myself at each pretty turret: "It is there!"

And so, on Thursday morning, I left Tours by the barrier Saint-Éloi, crossed the bridges of Saint-Sauveur, arrived at Poncher—looking up at every house—and reached the road to Chinon. For the first time in my life, I could stop under a tree, walk as slowly or as rapidly as I pleased, without question from anyone. To a poor creature crushed beneath the various tyrannies which, little or great,

weigh heavily upon all young people, the first employment of free will, exercised even in trifles, contributed indescribable gladness to the heart. Many reasons combined to make this day a fête full of enchantments. In my childhood, my walks had never taken me further than a league beyond the town. Neither my excursions in the neighborhood of Pont-le-Voy nor those that I had made in Paris had spoiled me for the beauties of rural nature. Nevertheless, from the early memories of my life, there still remained to me the feeling of the beautiful which breathes in that scenery of Tours with which I had grown familiar. Although entirely fresh to the poetry of scenery, I was, however, unconsciously exacting, like those who, without having any experience of an art, at once form an ideal of it.

In going to the château of Frapesle, pedestrians and horsemen shorten the way by crossing the plains known by the name of Charlemagne, waste land, situated at the top of the plateau which separates the valley of the Cher from that of the Indre, whence leads a short cut to Champy. These level, sandy plains, which depress one for about three miles, connect, through a woody clump, with the road to Saché, the name of the parish to which Frapesle belongs. This road, which runs into the road to Chinon, well beyond Ballan, skirts an undulating heath with no particular unevenness, as far as the little district of Artanne. Here is disclosed a valley beginning at Montbazon, ending at the Loire, and apparently starting beneath the

châteaux perched upon these double hills; a magnificent emerald basin in the bottom of which winds the Indre with serpentine movements. At sight of this, I was overcome with a delighted astonishment for which the tedium of the plains or the fatigue of the journey had paved the way.

"If this woman, the flower of her sex, inhabits any place upon earth, this, then, is the place."

At this thought, I leaned against a walnut-tree beneath which, since that day, I rest every time that I revisit my beloved valley. Under this tree, the confidant of my thoughts, I examine myself upon the changes that I have undergone during the time that has elapsed since the last day I left it. She lived there, my heart was not deceiving me: the first castle that I saw upon the slope of a plain was her dwelling. When I sat under my walnut-tree, the tiles on her roof and the panes of her windows were sparkling in the noonday sun. Her muslin gown was the white spot that I could see among the vines beneath a peach-tree. She was, as you already know, without as yet knowing anything further, the LILY OF THIS VALLEY where she was growing for Heaven by filling it with the perfume of her virtues. With no other sustenance than a dimly seen object that filled my soul, I found infinite love written in the long ribbon of water streaming in the sun between two green banks, in the rows of poplars adorning this vale of love with their flickering lace-work, in the oak-trees rising between the vineyards on the ever changing slopes that the

river rounds off, and in the shadowy horizons shifting athwart each other. If you want to see nature in the beauty and purity of a betrothed, go there on a spring day; if you want to soothe the bleeding wounds of your heart, return there during the last days of autumn; there, in springtime, Love, flutters his wings in mid air; there, in autumn, one thinks of those who are no more. There the sick lungs inhale a kindly freshness, the eye reposes upon golden tufts that impart their peaceful sweetness to the soul.

At this moment, the mills situated on the falls of the Indre, were giving voice to this quivering valley, the poplars were swaying in their glee, there was not a cloud in the sky, birds were singing, grasshoppers chirping, everything there was melody. Do not ask me again why I love Touraine; I do not love it as one does one's birthplace, or as one loves an oasis in the desert; I love it as an artist loves art; I love it less than I do you; but, without Touraine, maybe I should not live any longer. Without knowing why, my eyes kept returning to the white spot, to the woman gleaming in this immense garden as, amidst green thickets might flash the bell of a convolvulus, that withers at a touch. With soul astir, I went down to the bottom of this clump, and soon saw a village which the poetry overflowing within me disposed me to think incomparable. Imagine three mills set among gracefully outlined islands, wreathed with several clumps of trees in the middle of a meadow of water; what other name

can be given to those aquatic vegetations, so tenacious, so beautifully colored, that cover the river, surge above it, undulate with it, abandon themselves to its caprices and bend themselves to the river's storm as it is lashed by the wheel of the mills? Here and there rise masses of gravel where the water breaks, forming fringes in which the sun glistens. Amaryllis, nenuphar, water-lilies, bulrushes and flox deck the banks with their gorgeous carpeting. A quivering bridge composed of rotten planks, the piles covered with flowers, the handrail set with clinging grasses and velvety mosses hanging over the river and never falling; worn-out barges, fishermen's nets, a shepherd's monotonous chant, the ducks that were sailing amongst the islands or preening themselves on the *jard*, as the coarse sand brought by the Loire is called; millers' boys, their caps over their ears, busy loading their mules; each one of these details gave wonderful charm to the scene. Imagine beyond the bridge two or three farms, a dovecote, some turtledoves, about thirty huts divided by gardens and by hedges of honeysuckle, jasmine and clematis; then rubbish flourished in front of all the doors, some cocks and hens in the paths,—such is Pont-de-Ruan, a pretty village crowned by an old church full of character, a church of the time of the Crusades, and such as painters seek for their pictures. Encircle the whole with old walnut-trees, and young poplars with pale yellow leaves, put some graceful buildings in the middle of the distant meadows where the eye grows

bewildered beneath a hot, misty sky, and you will have an idea of one of the thousand points of view of this beautiful country.

I followed the path to Saché on the left of the river, while observing the details of the hills that adorn the opposite shore. Finally, I came to a park of trees, centuries old, that disclosed the château of Frapesle. I arrived just as the bell was ringing for déjeuner. After the meal, my host, never dreaming that I had come from Tours on foot, showed me over the environs of his estate, whence on all sides I saw the valley under all its aspects; here a peep, and there the whole of it; my eyes were often drawn to the horizon by the beautiful golden sheet of the Loire, where, among the nets, the sails appeared to be fantastic figures which vanished, swept away by the wind. By ascending a ridge, I was able for the first time to admire the château d'Azay, a diamond cut with facets, set in the Indre, and mounted on piles hidden in flowers. Then in the background I saw the romantic masses of the château de Saché, a melancholy abode full of harmonies, too serious for superficial people, dear to poets whose hearts are aching. And so, later on, I loved the silence of it, the great hoary trees and that indescribable mystery pervading its lonely vale! But each time that I recognized the tiny castle—noticed and singled out at my first glance—on the slope of the neighboring hill, I stopped there with delight.

"Eh!" said my host, reading in my eyes that

eager desire always so naïvely betokened at my age, "you scent a pretty woman from afar as a dog smells the game."

I did not like this last expression, but I asked the name of the castle and that of the owner.

"That is Clochegourde," he said, "a pretty house belonging to the Comte de Mortsauf, the representative of an historic family of Touraine, whose fortune dates from Louis XI., and whose name indicates the accident to which he owes both his coat of arms and his celebrity. He descends from a man who survived the gallows. And so the Mortsauf bearings are *or, a la croix de sable alezée, potencée et contre potencée, chargée encœur d'une fleur de lys d'or au pied nourri* with *Dieu saulve le roi notre sire*, as a device. The count came to settle upon this property upon the return of the emigration. This estate belongs to his wife, a demoiselle de Lenoncourt, of the house of Lenoncourt-Givry, which is dying out: Madame de Mortsauf is the only daughter. The small fortune belonging to this family is in such strange contrast to the celebrity of the names, that, either from pride or necessity, they always remain at Clochegourde and they receive nobody. Until now, their attachment to the Bourbons may have accounted for their isolation; but I doubt if the King's return alters their way of living. Upon coming to settle here, last year, I went to pay them a formal call; they returned it and invited us to dinner; the winter has separated us for some months; and then political events have delayed our return, for I have been but

a short time at Frapesle. Madame de Mortsauf is a woman who might occupy the highest place anywhere."

"Does she often go to Tours?"

"She never goes there. But," he said, correcting himself, "she went there lately, in connection with the visit of the Duc d'Angoulême, who showed much graciousness to Monsieur de Mortsauf."

"It is she!" I cried.

"She, who?"

"A woman who has beautiful shoulders."

"You will meet many women in Touraine who have beautiful shoulders," he said, laughing. "But, if you are not tired, we can cross the river, and go up to Clochegourde, where you will see whether you recognize your shoulders."

I accepted, not without a blush of delight and shame. About four o'clock, we arrived at the little château that my eyes had been caressing for so long. This dwelling, which produces a fine effect in the landscape, is in reality modest. It has five windows in front, each one of those ending the façade looking south projects about four yards, an architectural stratagem that gives the appearance of two wings and adds to the grace of the building; the middle one serves as a door, and leads by a double flight of stairs on to terraced gardens adjoining a narrow meadow alongside the Indre. Although a public pathway separates this field from the lowest terrace, which is shaded by an alley of acacias and ailanthus, it seems to form part of the garden; for the path is

sunken, embanked on one side by the terrace and bordered on the other by a Normandy hedge. The well-tended slopes add sufficiently to the distance between the house and the river to prevent any inconvenience from the vicinity of the water, without detracting from the enjoyment of it. Beneath the house are sheds, stables, toolhouses, and kitchens, the different entrances to which form arches. The roof is gracefully rounded at the angles, adorned with attics with carved sash-bars and leaden bouquets at the gable-ends. The roofing, neglected no doubt during the Revolution, is covered with the mildew produced by the uniform reddish mosses that grow upon houses facing the south. The French window on the steps is surmounted by a bell-tower where there still remains the carved escutcheon of the Blamont-Chauvrys: *écartelé de gueules à un pal de vair, flanqué de deux mains appaumées de carnation et d'or à deux lances de sable mises en chevron.* I was deeply struck by the device: *Voyez tous, nul ne touche!* The supporters, which are a griffin and dragon *gules* enchained with *or,* produced a fine effect sculptured. The Revolution had injured the ducal coronet and crest, which consists of a sinople palm fructed in *or.* Senart, Secretary of the Committee of Public Safety, was bailiff of Saché before 1781, which accounts for these ravages.

These arrangements give an air of elegance to this castle, wrought like a flower that scarcely seems to weigh upon the ground. Seen from the valley, the ground-floor appears to be on the first story, but

on the side of the courtyard it is level with a wide gravel path leading on to a lawn bright with flower-beds. To right and left, the vineyards, orchards and a few patches of arable land planted with walnut-trees, slope steeply, surrounding the house with their foliage, and reaching to the shores of the Indre, lined at this point with clumps of trees, the green of which nature herself has variegated. While climbing the path that skirts Clochegourde, I was admiring these well arranged masses, and breathing an air laden with happiness. Has then the moral nature, like the physical nature, its electric communications and its rapid changes of temperature? My heart was beating at the approach of secret events that were to affect it forever, like animals making merry in expectation of fine weather. This day, so memorable a one of my life, was not lacking in any of the circumstances that could solemnize it. Nature was adorned like a woman going to meet the beloved, my soul for the first time had heard her voice, my eyes had admired her as fertile, as varied as my imagination had pictured her in those dreams at college, of which I have told you in a few words that are powerless to explain their influence to you, for they have been, as it were, an Apocalypse in which my life was figuratively foretold to me: every happy or unhappy incident is connected with it by strange images, links visible to the eyes of the mind alone.

We crossed an outer yard surrounded with buildings necessary to rural occupations, a barn, wine-

press, cow-houses and stables. Warned by the barking of a watch-dog, a servant came out to meet us, and told us that Monsieur le Comte, having been away at Azay since the morning, would no doubt be returning, and that Madame la Comtesse was at home. My host looked at me. I trembled lest he should not wish to see Madame de Mortsauf in the absence of her husband, but he told the servant to announce us. Impelled by a childish eagerness, I rushed into the long anteroom that runs through the house.

"Pray come in, messieurs!" then said a golden voice.

Although Madame de Mortsauf had uttered but one word at the ball, I recognized her voice, which penetrated my soul and flooded it as a ray of sunlight fills and gilds a prisoner's cell. At the thought that she might remember my face, I longed to make my escape; there was not time, she appeared on the threshold, our eyes met. I do not know which blushed the more, she or I. Sufficiently taken aback to be unable to speak, she returned to her seat in front of the tapestry frame, after the servant had drawn forward two armchairs; she finished pulling out her needle in order to give an excuse for her silence, counted two or three stitches and raised her head, alike gentle and haughty, towards Monsieur de Chessel, while asking him to what happy chance she owed his visit. Although eager to learn the truth about my appearance, she looked at neither of us; her eyes were constantly riveted upon

the river; but, from the manner in which she was listening, you would have said that, like the blind, she could tell the workings of the mind in the imperceptible tones of the voice. And such was the case. Monsieur de Chessel mentioned my name and told my biography. It was some months since I had arrived in Tours, to which place my parents had brought me home when Paris was threatened with war. A native of Touraine, to whom Touraine was unknown, she beheld in me a young man debilitated by excessive study, sent to Frapesle as a diversion, whom Monsieur de Chessel had shown over his estate, which I was visiting for the first time. At the bottom of the hill only, had I told him of my walk from Tours to Frapesle, and fearing for my already enfeebled health, he had bethought himself of dropping in at Clochegourde thinking that Madame de Mortsauf would allow me to rest there. Monsieur de Chessel was telling the truth, but a lucky chance seems so far fetched, that Madame de Mortsauf entertained some suspicion; she looked at me with cold, stern eyes that made me drop my lids, as much through I know not what feeling of humiliation as to hide the tears that I kept back between my lashes. The stately châtelaine saw the perspiration on my forehead; she may also have guessed at the tears, for she offered me all that I might require, at the same time expressing a consoling kindness which restored my power of speech. I was blushing like a guilty girl, and, in the tremulous voice of an old man, I thanked her in the negative.

"All that I wish," I said, raising my eyes to hers which I met for the second time, but only for an instant like a flash of lightning, "is not to be sent away from here; I am so numb with fatigue that I could not walk."

"Why do you suspect the hospitality of our beautiful country?" she said, "you will doubtless give us the pleasure of dining at Clochegourde?" she added, turning to her neighbor.

I gave my patron a look in which shone so much entreaty that he arranged to accept this proposal, the formula of which required a refusal. If knowledge of the world enabled Monsieur de Chessel to recognize such distinctions, a young man without experience believes so firmly in the union between speech and thought in a beautiful woman, that I was very much astonished when, on our way home in the evening, my host said:

"I stayed, because you were dying to; but, if you do not set things right, I may fall out with my neighbors."

This *if you do not set things right* made me thoughtful for a long time. If I pleased Madame de Mortsauf she could not bear ill-will to the person who had brought me into her house. Then Monsieur de Chessel credited me with power to interest her; was not that enough to inspire me with it? This explanation corroborated my hope at a time when I had need of succor.

"It seems difficult," he replied, "Madame de Chessel expects us."

"She has you every day," rejoined the countess, "and we can let her know. Is she alone?"

"She has Monsieur l'Abbé de Quélus."

"Well, then," she said, rising to ring the bell, "you will dine with us."

This time, Monsieur de Chessel believed her to be sincere and gave me a congratulatory look. As soon as I was sure of remaining for an evening under this roof, I enjoyed as it were an eternity. To many unhappy beings, to-morrow is a word without meaning, and I was then numbered amongst those who have no kind of faith in the morrow; when I had a few hours of my own, I revelled in a whole lifetime of delight. Madame de Mortsauf began about the country, the crops and the vines, conversation which was unfamiliar to me.

In a mistress of the house, this behavior attests either a lack of breeding or her contempt for the person whom she thus shuts out, as it were, from the conversation; but with the countess it was embarrassment. If at first I thought she was aiming at treating me as a child, if I envied the privilege of men of thirty which enabled Monsieur de Chessel to converse with his neighbor on serious subjects that I did not understand, if I sulked in telling myself that all was for him; some months after that I knew how significant is a woman's silence, and how many thoughts lie beneath a general conversation. First of all, I tried to settle myself comfortably in my armchair; then I recognized the advantages of my position while yielding to the charm of listening to the

countess's voice. The inspiration of her mind showed itself in the recoil of the syllables, just as sound is divided by the keys of a flute; it died away rippling in the ear whence it quickened the action of the blood. Her way of saying the terminations in *i* made one fancy it to be some song of a bird; the *ch* as pronounced by her was a caress, and the manner in which she attacked the *t's* implied the despotism of the heart. In this way, she unconsciously expanded the meaning of words, and led one's mind into a superhuman world. How many times have I not let her continue some discussion that I might have ended! how many times have I not brought upon myself an unmerited scolding so as to listen to these strains of the human voice, to breathe the melody that issued from her soulful lips, to embrace that expressive intellect with the same passion that I should have shown in pressing the countess to my breast! How like the joyous song of a swallow when she could laugh! but how like the voice of the swan calling to its mates when she spoke about her sorrows!

The countess's inattention enabled me to examine her. My eye feasted itself as it glanced over the beautiful speaker, it encircled her waist, kissed her feet, and sported amid the curls of her hair. And yet, I was a prey to such terror as will be understood by those who, at some time in their life, have experienced the boundless joys of a genuine passion. I was afraid lest she should catch my eyes riveted upon the place on her shoulders that I had embraced

so ardently. This dread revived the temptation, and I succumbed, I looked at them! my eye rent the material, again I saw the freckle that marked the rise of the pretty line which divided her back, like a fly lost in milk, which, ever since the ball, always glowed at night in those shades in which young men of intense imagination and purity of life wander in their dreams.

I can sketch you the chief features which would everywhere have attracted attention to the countess; but the most correct drawing, the most glowing coloring would still convey nothing. Her face was one of those whose likeness requires the undiscoverable artist who knows how to paint the reflex of inward fires, and how to reproduce that luminous vapor denied by science, which words cannot interpret, but which is visible to a lover. Her fine, ashen hair often gave her pain, and these sufferings were doubtless caused by the sudden returns of the blood to the head. Her rounded forehead, protuberant like that of *la Joconde*, seemed to be full of unspoken thoughts, repressed feelings, flowers drowned in the waters of bitterness. Her greenish eyes, dotted with brown, were always pale; but, if it were a question of her children, if any animated outpourings of joy or sorrow, unusual in the life of submissive women, ever escaped her, her eye would then flash with a subtle light that seemed as if it were kindled at the well-springs of life and were bound to exhaust them; lightning which had wrung tears from me when she overwhelmed me with her

terrible scorn and with which she was able to abash the boldest lids. A Greek nose, like those drawn by Phidias, connected by a double curve with gracefully sinuous lips, spiritualized her oval-shaped face, the complexion of which, comparable to the tissue of white camellias, deepened on the cheeks into pretty pink tints. Her embonpoint destroyed neither the grace of her figure nor the fulness required for the endurance of her beautiful, although developed shape. You will immediately understand the kind of perfection, when you know that, in joining the fore-arm, the dazzling treasures which had fascinated me showed no signs of any crease. The base of her head presented none of those hollows which cause the nape of some women to resemble the trunks of trees, her muscles formed no cords and the lines were everywhere rounded off in flexuosities as distracting to the eye as to the brush. A soft down died away along her cheeks and in the curves of her neck, retaining the light and turning it into silk. Her small, well-shaped ears, according to her own expression, were those of a slave and a mother. Later on, when I dwelt in her heart, she would say : " Here is Monsieur de Mortsauf ! " and would prove to be right, whilst I could as yet hear nothing, I who possessed a remarkable range of hearing. Her arms were beautiful, her hand was long, with fingers curving backwards, and, as in antique statues, the flesh came beyond her delicately ribbed nails.

I should offend you by giving the preference to flat

instead of round waists, if you were not an exception. The round waist is a sign of strength, but women so constructed are imperious and self-willed, more voluptuous than tender. On the other hand, women with flat waists are unselfish, full of delicacy, apt to be melancholy ; they make better wives than the others. The flat waist is pliant and soft, the round waist is inflexible and jealous. Now you know how she was made. She had the foot of a well-bred woman, the foot that walks little, quickly tires and rejoices the eye when it peeps beyond the dress.

Although she was the mother of two children, I never met anyone of her sex who was more girlish than she. Her countenance was expressive of a versatility, combined with something indescribably bewildering and dreamy which attracted one to her as the painter draws us to the face in which his genius has conveyed a world of feeling. Her visible qualities, however, can only be described by simile. Think of the pure, wild scent of the heather that we picked on our way back from the villa Diodati, the pink and black color of which you praised so much, and you will understand how it was that this woman could be elegant, remote from the world, unaffected in her expressions, refined in the things that became her own, both black and pink. Her body possessed the vigor that we admire in newly unfurled leaves, her intellect the penetrating conciseness of a savage ; She was childish through feeling, serious through suffering, matronly and maidenly. And so she was

guilelessly pleasing, in her manner of sitting down, of rising, of remaining silent or of putting in a remark. Usually collected, attentive as the sentinel upon whom the welfare of all depends and who watches for disaster, she sometimes broke into smiles that revealed the naturally merry person buried beneath the demeanor exacted by her way of living. Her coquetry was born of mystery, she aroused wonder instead of inspiring the gallantries solicited by women, and showed the vivid flame of her early nature, her early wonderful dreams as one sees the sky through the break in the clouds. This involuntary revelation made those thoughtful who did not feel an inward tear dried up by the heat of desire. The rarity of her gestures and especially of her looks —with the exception of her children, she looked at no one—gave an incredible solemnity to all that she did and said, when she did or said a thing with that air that women can assume at a time when they are compromising their dignity by an avowal.

That day, Madame de Mortsauf wore a striped pink dress, a wide-hemmed collar, a black sash and boots to match. Her hair, plainly twisted on her head, was upheld by a tortoise-shell comb. Such is the imperfect sketch that I promised. But the constant emanation of her spirit upon her own people, that nourishing essence outpoured in torrents as the sun emits its light; her secret nature, her attitude in hours of serenity, her resignation in hours of gloom; all those eddies in which the character is shown, depend, like sky effects, upon un-

expected and transient circumstances which are in no way alike except as to the background whence they detach themselves, the description of which will necessarily be involved in the incidents of this story; a real domestic epic poem, as great in the eyes of the sage as are tragedies in the eyes of the crowd, and the recital of which will interest you as much from the share I took in it as for its similitude to a great many feminine destinies.

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Everything at Clochegourde bore the stamp of a truly English cleanliness. The salon in which the countess sat was entirely wainscoted, and painted in two shades of gray. The mantelpiece was ornamented with a time-piece set in a block of mahogany surmounted by a goblet, and with two big white china vases with threads of gold, in which was standing some Cape heather. A lamp was on the console. There was a backgammon table opposite the fireplace. Two wide cotton holders held back the fringeless white cambric curtains. The chairs were protected by gray covers, bordered with green galloon, and the work stretched on the countess's frame was enough to suggest the reason for hiding her furniture in this way. This simplicity amounted to grandeur. No room, among those that I have since seen, has produced upon me such fruitful, manifold impressions as those which overcame me in that salon of Clochegourde, calm and collected as the life of the countess, and from which one could picture the cloister-like regularity of her occupations. Most of my ideas, and even the most daring in science and politics, originated there, just

as perfume emanates from flowers; but there bloomed the mysterious plant which cast its pregnant pollen upon my soul, there shone the solar warmth which developed my good and withered my bad qualities. From the window, the eye encompassed the valley from the hill where stretches Pont-de-Ruan, as far as the château d'Azay, by following the windings of the opposite hill diversified by the towers of Frapesle, then the church, the borough and the old manor of Saché, which pile overlooks the meadow. These scenes, in harmony with this reposeful life and with no other disturbances than those caused by the family, imparted their serenity to the soul. Had I met her there for the first time, between the count and her two children, instead of finding her resplendent in her ball-gown, I should not have ravished her by that delirious kiss which I then regretted in thinking that it might destroy the future of my love! No, in the melancholy moods into which I was plunged by misery, I should have knelt down, kissed her slipper, dropped a few tears upon it, and then have thrown myself into the Indre.

But, after having touched the cool jasmin of her skin and drunk the milk of this love-filled cup, I had the taste and hope of human delights in my mind; I wanted to live and await the hour of pleasure, as the savage watches for the hour of vengeance; I wanted to hang in the trees, creep among the vines, crouch in the Indre; for accomplices I wanted the silence of night, the languor of life, the heat of the

sun, in order to finish the delicious apple into which I had already bitten. Had she asked me for the flower that sings or for the treasures buried by the companions of Morgan the destroyer, I would have brought them to her so as to obtain the certain riches and the silent flower for which I longed! At the end of the dream into which I had been plunged by contemplation of my idol and during which a servant came and spoke to her, I heard her talking of the count. It was only then that I reflected that a wife must belong to her husband. I turned giddy at the thought. Then I felt a passionate and gloomy curiosity to see the owner of this treasure. I was swayed by two feelings, hatred and fear; a hatred that recognized no obstacle and gauged them all without anxiety; and a vague but real fear of the contest, of its issue and of HER above all. A prey to indescribable feelings, I dreaded those dishonoring shakes of the hand, I already foresaw those elastic scruples with which the fiercest wills clash and against which they become blunted; I feared that passive resistance which now-a-days deprives social life of the catastrophes courted by impassioned persons.

"Here is Monsieur de Mortsauf," she said.

I started to my feet like a frightened horse. Although this movement escaped neither Monseiur de Chessel nor the countess it procured me no silent hint, for a diversion was caused by a little girl whom I should have taken to be six years old, and who was saying as she came in:

"Here is father."

"Well, Madeleine?" said her mother.

The child held out to Monsieur de Chessel the hand he was waiting for, and she looked at me very attentively after having given me her little curtsey full of astonishment.

"Are you satisfied with her health?" said Monsieur de Chessel to the countess.

"She is better," she replied, stroking the hair of the little one who was already cuddled in her lap.

A question put by Monsieur de Chessel informed me that Madeleine was nine; I showed some surprise at my mistake, and my astonishment brought a cloud to the mother's brow. My introducer threw me one of those meaning glances with which society people give us a second education. There, no doubt, was a maternal sore, the dressing of which was to be spared. A sickly child with pale eyes and a skin as white as porcelain under a light, Madeleine would doubtless never have survived in the atmosphere of a town. Country air, and the care of her mother who seemed as if she were brooding over her, kept life in this body which was as delicate as a plant grown in a hothouse in spite of the inclemency of a foreign climate. Although she in no way recalled her mother, Madeleine seemed to have her soul, and that soul sustained her. Her scanty black hair, her hollow eyes, her sunken cheeks, her wasted arms, and her narrow chest told of a struggle between life and death, a ceaseless duel in which till now the countess had been victorious. She forced herself to

be lively, no doubt in order to spare her mother pain; for, at certain moments when she was not on her guard, she assumed the attitude of a weeping willow. You would have said she was a little gypsy suffering from hunger, come from her home as a beggar, exhausted, but brave and ready for her public.

"Where have you left Jacques, then?" asked her mother, kissing her on the white line that parted her hair into two bands like a raven's wings.

"He is coming with father."

Just then, the count came in followed by his son whom he was holding by the hand. Jacques, the living image of his sister, presented the same symptoms of feebleness. Seeing these two frail children beside such a gloriously beautiful mother, it was impossible not to guess at the sources of the sorrow that softened the countess's temples and caused her to suppress one of those thoughts that are only confided to God, but which impart a terrible significance to the brow. In greeting me, Monsieur de Mortsauf glanced at me, not so much observantly as with the awkward uneasiness of a man whose mistrust arises from his want of practice in managing analysis. After having informed him of the situation and having mentioned my name, his wife yielded her place to him and left us. The children, whose eyes followed their mother's as if they derived their light from them, wanted to go with her, she said: "Stay here, dear loves!" and put her finger to her lips. They obeyed, but their faces clouded. Ah! to hear

applied to one that word *dear*, what tasks would one not have undertaken ? Like the children, I felt less warm when she was not there. My name changed the count's disposition toward me. From being cold and supercilious, he became, if not affectionate, at least politely cordial, showed me tokens of consideration and appeared delighted at receiving me. In days gone by, my father had risked his life for our rulers by playing a great, but obscure rôle ; full of danger, but one that might be efficacious. When all was lost by the accession of Napoléon to the head of affairs, like many secret conspirators, he took refuge in the pleasures of provincial and private life, while submitting to accusations that were as harsh as they were undeserved ; the inevitable reward of gamblers who stake their all, and succumb after having served as a pivot for political intrigue. Knowing nothing of the fortune, the antecedents or the prospects of my family, I was equally ignorant of the circumstances of that lost career that the Comte de Mortsauf remembered. Meanwhile, though antiquity of name, the most precious quality a man could have in his eyes, might account for the reception which confused me, I did not learn the real reason until later. At the time, this sudden transition put me at my ease. When the two children saw the conversation resumed among us three, Madeleine withdrew her head from her father's hands, looked at the open door, slipped out like an eel, followed by Jacques. They both rejoined their mother, for I heard their voices and movements,

sounding, in the distance, like the humming of bees round the beloved hive.

I contemplated the count in an endeavor to guess at his character; but I was sufficiently interested in several chief features to dwell upon the superficial examination of his physiognomy. Only forty-five years old, he seemed to be nearer sixty, so quickly had he aged in the great wreck which closed the XVIIIth century. The semi-circle of hair which monastically enwreathed the back of his bald head, died away at the ears, caressing the temples with gray tufts streaked with black. His face bore a vague resemblance to that of a white wolf whose muzzle is smeared with blood, for his nose was inflamed like that of a man whose life is impaired in its elements, whose stomach is enfeebled, whose moods are vitiated by past illnesses. His flat forehead, too wide for his face which terminated in a point, transversely wrinkled in irregular gradations, bespoke the habits of an outdoor life, and not the fatigues of intellect, the weight of invariable misfortune and not the efforts made to surmount it. His cheekbones, projecting and dark in the midst of the pale tint of his complexion, indicated a frame strong enough to insure him a long life. His limpid eye, yellow and hard, fell upon one like a ray of winter sunshine, luminous without warmth, anxious without thought, suspicious without reason. His mouth was violent and imperious, his chin straight and long. Thin and tall, he bore the demeanor of a nobleman relying upon a conventional importance,

who knows himself to be above others by right, beneath others in reality. The unconstraint of the country had led him to neglect his outward appearance. His clothes were those of the farmer whom the peasants, as well as the neighbors, no longer take into account save for his territorial income. His brown, nervous hands showed that he never wore gloves except when riding or on Sundays going to mass. His boots were clumsy. Although the ten years of emigration and the ten years' farming had had an influence upon his physique, he still possessed traces of nobility. The most malignant liberal, a word not then coined, would easily have recognized in him the chivalrous loyalty, the incorruptible convictions of a persistent reader of *La Quotidienne*. He would have admired in him the religious man, passionately devoted to his cause, unreserved in his political antipathies, incapable of serving his party personally, quite capable of ruining it, and ignorant of state matters in France. In fact, the count was one of those upright men who adapt themselves to nothing and obstinately obstruct everything, ready to die fighting at the post assigned to them, but miserly enough to sacrifice their lives rather than give their money.

During dinner, I remarked, in the depression of his withered cheeks and in certain looks secretly bent upon his children, traces of vexatious thoughts the outbursts of which died away upon the surface. Seeing him, who is there that would not have understood him? Who would not have taxed him

with having fatally transmitted to his children those lifeless bodies? If he reproached himself, he denied to others the right to judge him. With all the bitterness of a power that knows itself to be at fault, but without sufficient grandeur or charm to compensate for the sum of misery that he had thrown into the scales, his private life must have presented the asperities betrayed in his sharp features and incessantly restless eyes. When his wife came back, followed by the two children clinging to her side, I then suspected some sorrow, just as when walking over the vaults of a cellar, the feet are in some sort conscious of depth. At sight of these four persons together, while encircling them with my glances, going from one to the other, studying their faces and their respective attitudes, thoughts steeped in melancholy fell upon my heart just as a fine gray rain enshrouds a lovely country after some beautiful dawn. When the topic of conversation was exhausted, the count, at the expense of Monsieur de Chessel, again brought me to the fore by informing his wife of several circumstances concerning my family that were unknown to me. He asked me how old I was. When I told him, the countess repaid me with the same movement of surprise that I had shown about her little girl. Perhaps she took me for fourteen. It was, as I afterward knew, the second link that bound her so closely to me. I read her soul. Her maternity thrilled, lighted by a tardy ray of sunshine that gave her hope. Seeing me, past twenty, so puny and delicate and withal so

vigorous, a voice may have cried within her "They will live!" She looked at me curiously, and I felt that at that moment much of the ice between us was melting. It seemed as if she had a thousand questions to ask me and were reserving them all.

"If study has made you ill," she said, "the air of our valley will restore you."

"Modern education is fatal to children," continued the count, "we cram them with mathematics, kill them with science, and exhaust them before the time. You must rest here," he said to me, "you are crushed beneath the avalanche of ideas that has rolled over you. What times this universal education will bring upon us unless the evil is prevented by restoring public instruction to the religious corporations!"

These words were characteristic forerunners of the remark he made one day at the elections while refusing his vote for a man whose talents might be of use to the royalist cause: "I should always mistrust clever people," he replied to the agent for electoral votes. He suggested that we should take a turn in the garden, and rose.

"Monsieur ——" said the countess.

"Well, my dear?" he replied, turning with a haughty abruptness which showed how much he tried to be the autocrat at home, but how little he succeeded.

"Monsieur has walked from Tours; Monsieur de Chessel knew nothing about it and walked him about Frapesle."

"You were imprudent," he said to me, "although at your age—"

And he shook his head regretfully.

Conversation was resumed. It was not long before I discovered how unreasonable his royalism was, and how much caution was necessary in order to avoid collision in its waters. The servant, who had quickly donned a suit of livery, announced dinner. Monsieur de Chessel gave his arm to Madame de Mortsauf, and the count seized mine gayly to pass into the dining-room, which, according to the rule of the ground-floor, matched the salon.

Paved with white tiles manufactured in Touraine, and wainscoted breast-high, the dining-room was hung with a varnished paper representing big panels framed in flowers and fruits; the window curtains were of muslin trimmed with red galloon; the side-boards were old Boule, and the frames of the chairs, upholstered in handmade tapestry, were of carved oak. Although plentifully supplied, there was nothing luxurious about the table: family silver without unity of design, Dresden china which was not then in fashion, octagonal decanters, knives with agate handles, and trays of Chinese lacquer under the bottles; some flowers stood in pots varnished and gilded on their fang-like indentations. I loved all these old things, I thought the Réveillon paper and its borders of flowers superb. The satisfaction with which my sails were swelling prevented me from seeing the inextricable difficulties placed between her and me by so coherent a life of solitude and rusticity. I was

near her, on her right hand, I poured out her drink. Yes, unhoped for happiness! I was touching her dress, I was eating her bread. In three hours' time, my life was mingling with hers! Anyway, we were linked by that terrible kiss, a kind of secret which filled us with mutual shame. I behaved with glorious cowardice; I exerted myself to please the count, who relished all my flattery; I would have stroked the dog, and courted the slightest wishes of the children; I would have brought them hoops, and agate marbles; I would have turned myself into a horse for them, and I was vexed that they did not take possession of me as of a thing belonging to them. Love has its intuitions as genius has, and I realized vaguely that violence, sullenness, and hostility would ruin my hopes. The dinner, to me a time of inward delight, came to an end. On finding myself in her house, I could think neither of her actual coldness, nor of the indifference underlying the count's politeness. Love, like life, has a period of puberty during which it is self-sufficient. I made several clumsy replies in harmony with the secret tumults of passion, but which nobody could guess at, not even *she,* who knew nothing of the love. The rest of the time was like a dream. This beautiful dream ceased when, by the light of the moon and on a warm, scented evening, I crossed the Indre amid fair fantasies which beautified the meadows, banks and hills; listening to the clear song, the unique note full of melancholy uttered ceaselessly at regular intervals by a tree-frog whose scientific name I do not know, but which

since that solemn day, I never hear without infinite delight. There, as elsewhere, I recognized, somewhat late, the stony insensibility which had hitherto blunted my feelings; I wondered whether it would always be so; I believed I must be under some fatal influence; the sinister events of the past struggled with the purely personal pleasures I had tasted. Before returning to Frapesle, I looked at Clochegourde and saw below it a boat, called a *toue* in Touraine, fastened to an ash-tree, and rocked by the water. This toue belonged to Monsieur de Mortsauf, who used it for fishing.

"Well," said Monsieur de Chessel, when we were in no danger of being overheard, "I need not ask you whether you discovered your beautiful shoulders; you are to be congratulated on the reception Monsieur de Mortsauf gave you! The deuce! you were at once taken into favor!"

This remark, followed by the one of which I have told you, revived my drooping courage. I had not spoken a word since leaving Clochegourde, and Monsieur de Chessel attributed my silence to happiness.

"What?" I replied in a tone of sarcasm which might equally well appear to be prompted by repressed passion.

"Nobody, no matter who, has ever been so graciously welcomed."

"I confess that I am myself astonished at this reception," I said, perceiving the inward bitterness revealed in this last remark.

Although I was too unskilled in worldly ways to

understand the reason of the feeling experienced by Monsieur de Chessel, I was nevertheless struck by the expression with which he betrayed it. My host possessed the infirmity of being called Durand, and made himself ridiculous by disowning the name of his father, a famous manufacturer, who had made an enormous fortune during the Revolution. His wife was the only heiress of the Chessels, an old parliamentary family, bourgeois under Henri IV. like that of most of the Parisian magistrates. As a man of far-reaching ambition, Monsieur de Chessel wanted to do away with his original Durand in order to attain the destiny he longed for. First he called himself Durand de Chessel, then D. de Chessel; he was now Monsieur de Chessel. Under the Restoration, he established a claim to the title of Count, in virtue of letters granted by Louis XVIII. His children will reap the fruits of his daring without knowing the grandeur of it. The remark of a certain caustic prince has often weighed upon his mind. "Monsieur de Chessel rarely appears *en Durand*," he said. This phrase entertained Touraine for a long time. Parvenus are like monkeys, whom they resemble in dexterity; seeing them at a height, one admires their agility in ascent; but, once they have reached the summit, one sees nothing more than their ignoble extremities. The reverse side of my host is made up of pettinesses increased by envy. So far, the peerage and he are two impossible tangents. To have a pretension and to justify it is the audacity of force; but to be unworthy of one's

avowed pretensions raises a constant ridicule which small minds gloat upon. Now, Monsieur de Chessel had not had the straight progress of the strong man; twice deputy, twice defeated in the elections; yesterday director-general, to-day nothing at all, not even sheriff, his successes or his failures have spoiled his temper and filled him with the acidity of the ambitious invalid. Athough an honest man, intelligent and capable of great things, it may be that the envy which animates existence in Touraine, where the natives exercise their faculties in detracting from everything, had been fatal to him in the high social spheres where those whose faces pucker over the success of others, whose lips are sullen, ill-adapted for compliment but quick at an epigram, meet with but little success. By trying for less, he might perhaps have obtained more; but, unfortunately, he had sufficient superiority to wish to be always ahead. At the present time, Monsieur de Chessel was at the dawn of his ambition, royalism was taking his fancy. Perhaps he was assuming great airs, but to me he was perfect. Besides, he pleased me for a very simple reason; in his house I found rest for the first time. The interest he showed in me, though perhaps feeble, appeared to me, a miserable, repulsed child, to be an image of paternal affection. The attentions of hospitality contrasted so strongly with the indifference that had hitherto crushed me, that I expressed a childish gratitude at living without chains and almost made much of. Indeed the masters of Frapesle are so much concerned in the dawn

of my happiness, that my mind blends them in the memories that I love to live over again. Later on, and in the very matter of letters patent, I had the pleasure of rendering my host some service. Monsieur de Chessel made use of his wealth with an ostentation that offended some of his neighbors ; he was able to renew his fine horses and elegant carriages ; his wife was particular about her toilette ; he received on a large scale ; his household was more numerous than the customs of the country required, he gave himself the airs of a prince. The estate of Frapesle is enormous. In presence of his neighbor and before all this luxury, the Comte de Mortsauf, reduced to the family cabriolet, which in Touraine is something between the coach and the post-chaise, forced by his moderate fortune to farm Clochegourde, remained a Tourangean until the day when royal favors restored his family to an almost unhoped-for splendor. His reception of a younger son of a ruined family whose escutcheon dates from the Crusades, served his purpose of humbling the superior fortune, and belittling the woods, the lands and meadows of his neighbor who was not a nobleman. Monsieur de Chessel had quite understood the count. And so they have always met politely, but with none of that daily intercourse, none of that pleasant intimacy which should have been established between Clochegourde and Frapesle, two estates divided by the Indre, and whose châtelaines, from their respective windows, could signal to each other.

Jealousy was not the only reason for the solitude in which the Comte de Mortsauf was living. His early education had been that of most children of noble family, an unfinished and superficial instruction supplemented by the teachings of society, the customs of the Court, and by the execution of the important offices of the crown or the high places. Monsieur de Mortsauf had emigrated just as his second education was beginning, so he went without it. He was one of those who believed in the speedy re-establishment of the monarchy in France; under this conviction, his exile had been spent in the most deplorable idleness. When the army of Condé dispersed, wherein his courage had caused him to be counted amongst the most devoted, he was expecting to return shortly under the white flag, and did not try, like some emigrants, to create an industrial life for himself. It may be, too, that he had not strength enough to resign his name in order to earn his bread in the toil of a despised occupation. His hopes, always pinned to the morrow, and perhaps his honor as well, prevented him from waiting on

influential strangers. Suffering undermined his courage. Long walks undertaken on foot without sufficient nourishment, upon ever deceived hopes, affected his health, disheartened his spirit. By degrees, his destitution became extreme. If to many men, want is a tonic, there are others to whom it is a dissolvent, and the count was one of these. At the thought of this poor nobleman of Touraine wandering and sleeping along the roads of Hungary, sharing a piece of mutton with Prince Esterhazy's shepherds, from whom the traveller begged the bread that the nobleman never would have accepted from the master, and that he refused many a time from hands inimical to France, I have never felt in my heart any malice against the emigrant, even though I thought him ridiculous in the day of triumph. The white hairs of Monsieur de Mortsauf had told me of terrible sufferings, and I sympathize too much with exiles to be able to judge them. The count's French and Touraine gayety gave way ; he became morose, fell ill, and was tended through charity in some German hospital. His illness was inflammation of the mesentery, often a fatal case, but the cure of which entails variation in the moods, and nearly always causes hypochondria. His amours, buried in the depths of his soul, and that I alone discovered, were amours of low degree, which not only attacked his vitality, but still further ruined it for the future. After twelve years of misery, he turned his eyes toward France, to which Napoléon's decree permitted him to return. When, passing by the Rhine,

the suffering pedestrian saw the belfry of Strasbourg on a beautiful evening, he fainted.

"La France! la France!" I cried: "There is la France!" he told me, just as a child cries "Mother!" when he is hurt.

Originally rich, he found himself poor; made to command a regiment or govern a state, he was without authority, without prospects; born healthy and robust, he returned infirm and broken. Lacking education in a country where men and things had necessarily grown, without any possible influence, he found himself despoiled of all, even of his bodily and moral forces. His want of fortune made his name a burden to him. His resolute opinions, his former conduct in the army under Condé, his sorrows, his memories, and his lost health, produced a susceptibility of nature not likely to be humored in France, the land of raillery. Half dying, he reached Maine, where, through some chance, perhaps owing to the civil war, the revolutionary government had forgotten to have sold a farm of considerable extent, which his farmer was keeping for him by pretending to be the owner. When the family of Lenoncourt, who inhabited Givry, a château situated near this farm, knew of the arrival of the Comte de Mortsauf, the Duc de Lenoncourt went to him to propose that he should live at Givry during the time that he was preparing a residence for himself. The Lenoncourt family were nobly generous to the count, who recovered during his stay of several months, and exerted himself to hide his sufferings during this first halt.

The Lenoncourts had lost their immense possessions. In name, Monsieur de Mortsauf was an eligible match for their daughter. Far from opposing her marriage to a man of thirty-five, sickly and aged, Mademoiselle de Lenoncourt seemed to be happy. Marriage gave her the right to live with her aunt, the Duchesse de Verneuil, sister of the Prince de Blamont-Chauvry, who was like an adopted mother to her.

An intimate friend of the Duchesse de Bourbon, Madame de Verneuil belonged to a saintly society the life of which was Monsieur Saint-Martin, a native of Touraine, and surnamed the *mysterious Philosopher*. The disciples of this philosophy practised the virtues counselled by the lofty speculations in mystic illuminism. This doctrine gives the key to the divine worlds, explains existence by transformations in which man progresses to sublime destinies, frees duty from its lawful degradation, applies the Quaker's immovable calmness to the troubles of life, and enjoins disregard of suffering while inspiring an indescribable feeling of maternity for the angel that we take to Heaven. It is stoicism with a future. Active prayer and pure love are the elements of this faith which departs from the Catholicism of the Roman Church to return to the Christianity of the Early Church.

Nevertheless, Mademoiselle de Lenoncourt remained in the bosom of the Apostolic Church, to which her aunt was always equally faithful. In the last days of her life, the Duchesse de Verneuil, severely tried by the revolutionary agitations, had con-

tracted a tinge of impassioned piety which shed into her darling child's soul *the light of heavenly love and the oil of inward joy,* to use the expressions of Saint-Martin himself. This man of peace and virtuous knowledge was received at Clochegourde by the countess several times after the death of her aunt, whom he had often visited. It was from Clochegourde that Saint-Martin supervised his last books which were printed at Tours in the house of Letourmy. Prompted by the wisdom of an old woman who has experienced the stormy passes of life, Madame de Verneuil gave Clochegourde to the young wife, for a home of her own. With the graciousness of old people, which is perfect when they are gracious, the duchess gave up everything to her niece, contenting herself with one room above the one she had formerly occupied and which was taken by the countess. Her almost sudden death threw a pall over the delight of this union, and communicated an indelible mournfulness to Clochegourde as it did to the bride's superstitious mind. To the countess, the early days of her settlement in Touraine were, if not the happiest, at least the most careless times in all her life.

After the irregularities of his sojourn abroad, Monsieur de Mortsauf, pleased at this glimpse of a merciful future, experienced a convalescence, as it were, of the mind ; in this valley he inhaled the intoxicating perfumes of flowering hope. Obliged to consider his income, he threw himself into preparations for his agricultural venture, and began by enjoying

some pleasure; but the birth of Jacques was a thunderbolt which ruined both present and future; the doctor despaired of the new-born child. The count carefully concealed this decree from the mother; then he sought medical advice for himself and received a hopeless answer which was confirmed by the birth of Madeleine. These two events, and a sort of inner certainty about the fatal sentence, increased the emigrant's sickly tendencies. His name for ever extinct, a young wife, pure, irreproachable, unhappy at his side, sacrificed to the agony of maternity, without its pleasures; this *soil* of his former life from which fresh suffering was springing, struck him to the heart, and completed his destruction. The countess guessed the past by the present and read into the future.

Although nothing is more difficult than to make a man happy who is conscious of his defects, the countess attempted this undertaking, which was worthy of an angel. In one day, she became a stoic. After having descended into the abyss whence she could still see Heaven, she devoted herself, for the sake of one man, to the mission that a sister of charity undertakes for all; and in order to reconcile him with himself, she forgave him that which he could not forgive himself. The count became miserly, she accepted the privations inflicted; he was afraid of being deceived, as are all those who have known the life of the world only to acquire dislike of it, so she remained in solitude and submitted to his suspicions without a murmur; she

exerted all a woman's cunning to make him care for what was right, thus he fancied that he had ideas and at home tasted the pleasures of a superiority that he would not have had elsewhere. Then, after having gone so far along the road of matrimony, she resolved never to leave Clochegourde, knowing the count to have an hysterical mind, the flights of which, in a neighborhood of malice and gossip, might injure her children. Therefore nobody suspected Monsieur de Mortsauf's real incapacity, she had decked his ruins in a thick cloak of ivy. So the count's variable character, not discontented, but malcontent, encountered in his wife a smooth yielding soil in which he expanded himself by feeling his secret sorrows softened by its cooling balm.

This account is the most natural explanation of the words wrung from Monsieur de Chessel by secret mortification. His knowledge of the world had given him an insight into some of the mysteries entombed at Clochegourde. But if by her sublime attitude, Madame de Mortsauf deceived the world, she could not deceive the intelligent senses of love. When I found myself in my little room, the prescience of the truth made me bound in my bed, I could not endure being at Frapesle when I was able to see the windows of her room; I dressed, went stealthily downstairs and left the château by the door of a tower in which there was a spiral staircase. The coolness of the night calmed me. I crossed the Indre by the bridge of the Moulin Rouge, and I gained the blessed barge opposite Clochegourde

where a light was shining in the last window on the side of Azay.

I resumed my former meditations, now peaceful, now intermingled with the roulades of the songster of amorous nights, and with the unrivalled note of the nightingale of the waters. Thoughts awoke within me which glided away like phantoms while removing the gloom which had hitherto hidden my fair future. Mind and senses were equally fascinated. With what violence my longings flew to her. How many times I said to myself, like a fool with his refrain: "Shall I have her?" If, during the preceding days, the universe had seemed greater to me, in one single night it became a centre. To her clung all my aims and ambitions, I longed to be all things for her, so as to revive and fill her broken heart. How lovely was that night spent beneath her windows, amid the murmur of the waters filtering through the sluices of the mills, and broken by the voice of the hours sounding from the tower of Saché! During that refulgent night upon which this starry flower gave light to my life, I plighted my soul to her with all the faith of the poor Castilian knight whom we ridicule in Cervantes, and with which we begin love. At the first glimmer in the sky, at the first chirp of a bird, I escaped into the park of Frapesle; I was not seen by any peasant, nobody suspected my escapade, and I slept until the bell rang for breakfast. After breakfast, in spite of the heat, I wended my way down to the meadow to look once more at the Indre and its islands, at the

valley and its slopes, of which I seemed to be an ardent admirer; but, with a swiftness of foot that might vie with a runaway horse, I again sought my boat, my willows and my Clochegourde. Everything was silent and quivering, as the country is at noon. The motionless leaves were clearly outlined against the deep blue of the sky; the insects which live upon light, green dragon-flies, Spanish flies, were flying to their ash-trees and their reeds; the flocks were ruminating in the shade, the red soil of the vineyard was scorching, and the adders were gliding along the slopes.

What a change in the landscape that had been so cool and fair before my sleep! All of a sudden, I jumped out of the boat and went up the path to stroll round Clochegourde, whence I thought I had seen the count coming out. I was not mistaken, he was going along a hedge, and was doubtless making for a door opening on the Azay road, which skirts the river.

"How are you this morning, Monsieur le Comte?"

He looked at me delightedly, it was not often that he heard himself addressed like this.

"Very well," he said, "but you must be fond of the country to walk about in such heat?"

"Was I not sent here to live out in the open air?"

"Well then, would you like to come and see my rye being cut?"

"Why, willingly," I said, "I must confess that I

am incredibly ignorant. I cannot tell rye from wheat, or a poplar from an aspen; I know nothing about cultivation, or the different ways of farming an estate."

"Well then, come along," he said joyfully, retracing his steps, "come in by the little upper door."

He went back along the inner side of his hedge, I on the outer side.

"You will learn nothing at Monsieur de Chessel's," he said, "he is much too fine a gentleman to do anything but receive the accounts from his steward."

He then showed me his yards and outhouses, the pleasure gardens, the orchards and kitchen-gardens. Finally, he led me toward the long avenue of acacias and ailanthus, bordered by the river, where, upon a bench at the other end, I saw Madame de Mortsauf busy with her two children. How beautiful a woman looks beneath these minute, quivering, clear-cut leaves! Surprised perhaps at my naïve eagerness, she did not move, knowing well that we should go to her. The count made me admire the view of the valley, which, from there, presents a totally different aspect from those unfolded from the heights we had traversed. At that point, you would have taken it for a small corner of Switzerland. The meadow, intersected by the streams that flow into the Indre, is seen in its entire extent, and is lost in a misty distance. Toward Montbazon, the eye perceives an immense expanse of green, and at all other points is arrested by hills, masses

of trees, and rocks. We hastened our steps to go and greet Madame de Mortsauf, who suddenly dropped the book from which Madeleine was reading, and took Jacques, who was seized with a convulsive cough, on her knee.

"Well, what is the matter with him?" cried the count, turning pale.

"He has a sore throat," replied the mother, apparently not seeing me, "it is nothing."

She was holding both his head and back, and from her eyes darted two rays that seemed to be shedding life upon the poor weak creature.

"Your imprudence is something incredible," retorted the count sharply, "you expose him to the chill of the river and seat him on a bench of stone."

"But the seat is scorching, father," cried Madeleine.

"They were stifling up there," said the countess.

"Women always insist upon being in the right!" he said, looking at me.

To avoid showing approval or disapproval in my glance, I was looking at Jacques, who was complaining of pain in his throat, and who was carried off by his mother. Before leaving us, she heard her husband saying:

"When one has created such sickly children, one ought to know how to take care of them!"

Words that were utterly unjust; but his pride impelled him to justify himself at his wife's expense. The countess was flying up the slopes and steps. I

saw her disappearing through the French window. Monsieur de Mortsauf had seated himself on the bench, his head bent, thinking; my position was becoming intolerable, he neither looked at me nor spoke to me. Farewell to that walk during which I had so calculated upon ingratiating myself with him. I do not remember ever having spent a more horrible quarter of an hour than that was. I was in a profuse perspiration, saying to myself: "Shall I go? shall I not go?" What sad thoughts must have arisen within him to make him forget to go and see how Jacques was! He rose abruptly and came near me. We turned to look at the smiling valley.

"We will put off our walk till another day, Monsieur le Comte," I then said to him gently.

"Let us go out!" he replied. "I am unhappily accustomed to the sight of such crises, I who would give my life without any regret to preserve that of this child."

"Jacques is better, he is asleep, my love," said the golden voice.

Madame de Mortsauf suddenly appeared at the end of the alley, she came without any malice or bitterness, and returned my greeting. "I am pleased to see," she said, "that you like Clochegourde."

"My dear, would you like me to ride and fetch Monsieur Deslandes?" he said, showing a desire to be forgiven his injustice.

"Do not worry," she said, "Jacques did not sleep last night, that is all. The child is very nervous, he had a bad dream, and I spent all the time

telling him stories to send him to sleep. His cough is merely nervous, I have quieted it with a gum lozenge, and he has fallen asleep."

"Poor wife!" he said, taking her hand in his and looking at her with moistened eyes, "I did not know anything about it."

"What is the use of distressing you for trifles? Go to your rye. You know, if you are not there, the farmers will allow strange gleaners from the town to come into the field before the sheaves are removed."

"I am going to take my first lesson in agriculture, madame," I said to her.

"You have come to a good school," she replied, pointing to the count, whose mouth contracted into that smile of satisfaction which is commonly called pursing up one's lips.

It was only after two months that I knew she had spent the night in terrible anxiety, fearing that her son might have croup. And I, I had been in the boat, gently lulled by thoughts of love, imagining that, from her window, she could see me worshipping the gleam of the candle which was then lighting up her forehead, furrowed with deadly fears. The croup was prevailing in Tours, and was working fearful havoc. When we got to the door, the count said to me in a trembling voice:

"Madame de Mortsauf is an angel!" This word made me falter. As yet I only knew this family superficially, and the remorse which so naturally overwhelms a youthful mind at such a time, cried

out: "What right have you to disturb this great peace?"

Delighted at finding an auditor in a young man over whom he could win easy triumphs, the count spoke about the prospect that the return of the Bourbons was preparing for France. We had a rambling conversation in which I heard some really childish things that surprised me strangely. He was unacquainted with facts of geometrical evidence; he was afraid of educated people; superiority he denied; he ridiculed progress, perhaps with some reason; in short, I found he had a great many tender fibres which necessitated so many precautions in order to avoid hurting him, that a continuous conversation became a work of talent. When I had, as it were, laid hold of his defects, I adapted myself to them with as much versatility as the countess employed in humoring them. At another period of my life, I should undoubtedly have clashed with them; but, being as timid as a child, believing I knew nothing, or believing that grown men knew everything, I was amazed at the wonders obtained at Clochegourde by this patient agriculturist. I listened to his schemes with admiration. Finally, I expressed envy of this beautiful estate, its situation, this earthly paradise, while placing it far above Frapesle, thus, by an involuntary flattery, gaining the old nobleman's good will.

"Frapesle," I said, "is a massive piece of silver; but Clochegourde is a casket of precious stones!"

A phrase which he often repeated after that in quoting the author.

"Well, before we came here, it was all desolation," he said.

I was all ears whilst he was speaking of his seedlings and nurseries. Being new to country industries, I overwhelmed him with questions about the price of things and the means of cultivation, and he appeared to me to be delighted at having to teach me so many details.

"What do they teach you then?" he asked me with astonishment.

After that first day the count said to his wife as he went in:

"Monsieur Félix is a charming young man!"

That night, I wrote to my mother to send me some clothes and linen, telling her that I was going to stay at Frapesle. Ignorant of the great revolution that was then taking place, and not understanding the influence it was to exercise upon my career, I was expecting to return to Paris to complete my law studies, and the college classes were not resumed until the early part of November; so I had two months and a half before me.

*

During the first days of my stay, I attempted to make great friends with the count, and it was a time of painful impressions. In this man I discovered a senseless irascibility, a hastiness of action in any desperate emergency which frightened me. He would sometimes have sudden relapses into the valorous nobleman of Condé's army, parabolical flashes of that resolution, which, in the day of grave necessity can bore through politics like a shell, and which, by accident of judgment and courage makes an Elbée, a Bonchamp, a Charette of a man who is condemned to live at his country seat. At certain suppositions, his nose would contract, his forehead would light up, and his eyes flash lightning which would abate immediately after. I was afraid lest, in surprising the language of my eyes, Monsieur de Mortsauf should kill me without reflection. At that period, I was simply tender. That will, which so strangely alters men, was only just beginning to spring up in me. My extreme desires had given me those sudden agitations of feeling which resemble the shocks of terror. The struggle did not shake me, but I did not want to lose my life before tasting

the happiness of mutual love. The difficulties and my longings were increasing in two parallel lines. How was I to speak of my feelings? I was a prey to distressing perplexity. I awaited some chance, I was on the watch, I made friends with the children, whose love I gained, I tried to identify myself with the affairs of the household. By degrees, the count became less restrained with me. I then became acquainted with his sudden changes of temper, his deep and unreasonable fits of gloom, his abrupt outbursts of indignation, his bitter, curt complaints, his spiteful indifference, his attacks of suppressed passion, his childish lamentations, his outcries of a man in despair, his unexpected rages. Moral nature differs from physical nature in this, that it is in no way absolute; the intensity of effects is in proportion to the force of the characters or the ideas that we group round a fact. My attitude at Clochegourde, my future was at the mercy of this fantastic will. I cannot tell you what agony oppressed my mind, which at that time expanded as easily as it contracted, when upon entering I used to say to myself: "How will he receive me?" What anxiety of heart then overwhelmed me when a storm suddenly gathered upon that snowy brow. It was a ceaseless tension. And so I fell under the despotism of this man. My own sufferings helped me to divine those of Madame de Mortsauf. We began to exchange looks of intelligence, my tears sometimes flowed when she kept back hers. In this way the countess and I tested each other by sorrow. How many discoveries did I

not make during those first forty days of real bitterness, of tacit joys, of hopes at one time crushed, at another triumphant.

One evening, I found her musing gravely before a sunset which, while showing the valley as if it were a bed, was so voluptuously reddening the heights that it was impossible not to listen to the voice of that eternal Song of Songs with which Nature incites her creatures to love. Was the young girl reviving her lost illusions? was the woman suffering from some secret comparison? I thought I saw an abandon in her attitude favorable to first confessions, and said to her :

"These are trying days!"

"You have read into my soul," she said, "but how?"

"We are in touch with each other on so many points!" I replied. "Do we not belong to the small number of beings privileged to pain and pleasure, whose sensitive qualities all vibrate in unison while producing great inward echoes, and whose nervous nature is in ceaseless harmony with the principle of things? Put them where all is discordant and these persons will suffer horribly, just in the same way as their pleasure attains exaltation when they meet ideas, sensations or beings who are in sympathy with them. But for us there is a third condition, the miseries of which are known only to minds affected by the same malady, and in whom one meets fraternal comprehension. It is possible for us to be unmoved by either good or evil. Then

a speaking organ gifted with animation stirs within us in the void, becomes impassioned without object, yields sounds without producing melody, utters cries which are lost in oblivion ; a kind of terrible contradiction of a soul in revolt against the inutility of nothingness ; overwhelming odds in which our strength escapes wholly without sustenance, like blood from a secret wound. Sensibility flows in torrents, resulting in horrible debility, and unutterable melancholy for which the confessional has no ear. Have I not expressed our mutual sufferings ? "

She started, and without taking her eyes from the sunset, she replied :

" How can one so young know these things ? Have you then been a woman ? "

" Ah ! " I answered in a trembling voice, " my childhood was like one long illness."

" I hear Madeleine coughing," she said, hastily leaving me.

The countess saw that I was attentive to her, without taking offence, for two reasons. In the first place, she was as pure as a child, and her mind never launched out into any digressions. Then I amused the count, I was food for this lion without claws or mane. Finally, I found a reason for coming which seemed plausible to all. I did not know backgammon, Monsieur de Mortsauf proposed that he should teach me, I accepted. Just as we made our agreement, the countess could not help giving me a look of compassion which meant : " But you are throwing yourself into the jaws of the wolf ! " If I did not un-

derstand at first, the third day I knew to what I had pledged myself. My untiring patience, fruit of my childhood, matured during this time of probation. It was a delight to the count to indulge in merciless taunts when I failed to put into practice the principle or rule that he had explained to me; if I reflected, he complained of the tedium of a slow game; if I played fast, he grew angry at being hurried; if I was pegged, he told me, while profiting by it, that I was in too great haste. It was the tyranny of the schoolmaster, a despotism of the rod of which I can give you no idea save by comparing myself to Epictetus fallen under the yoke of a cruel child. When we played for money, his unvarying success caused him the most disgraceful, mean delight. One word from his wife would console me for everything, and quickly restore him to a sense of politeness and decorum. Very soon I fell into the furnace of an unforeseen torture.

In this occupation, my money went. Although the count always stood between his wife and me until the moment I left them, which was sometimes very late, I always hoped the moment might come when I should steal into her heart; but, in order to obtain that hour waited for with the painful patience of a hunter, was it not necessary to continue those tiresome games during which my mind was constantly harrowed, and which ran away with all my money? How many times already had we not dwelt in silence, absorbed in looking at some sunset effect on the meadow, at clouds in a gray sky, at misty

hills, or the quiverings of the moon in the jewels of the river, without saying more than:

"What a beautiful night!"

"The night is a woman, madame."

"What peace!"

"Yes, one cannot be entirely miserable here."

At this reply, she would go back to her tapestry. At last, I was hearing in her the stir of feeling caused by an affection that would have its way. Without money, farewell to the evening meetings! I had written to my mother to send me some; she scolded me, and did not send me any for eight days. To whom could I apply? And it was a matter of my life! And so, in the midst of my first great happiness, I was again to meet with the sufferings that had everywhere beset me; but, in Paris, at college, at school, I had escaped them by careful abstinence, my misery had been negative; at Frapesle it became active; then it was that I understood the desire to steal, those meditated crimes, those appalling fits of rage that furrow the soul and that we ought to stifle for fear of losing our self-respect. The memory of the cruel meditations, and the pangs inflicted upon me by my mother's parsimony have instilled into me the blessed indulgence for young people possessed by those who, without having transgressed, have reached the brink of the abyss as if to sound its depths. Although my honesty, fed upon cold perspirations, may have been strengthened at those moments when life yawns open and shows the arid gravel of its bed, every time that terrible human justice draws its

sword across a man's neck, I have said to myself: "Penal laws have been made by people who have not known misery." In this extremity I discovered, in Monsieur de Chessel's library, a treatise upon backgammon, and studied it; then my host was very willing to give me a few lessons; less harshly guided, I was able to make some progress, and apply the rules and calculations which I learned by heart.

In a few days, I was in a condition to conquer my master; but, when I won, his temper became execrable; his eyes glared like a tiger's, his face became convulsed, his eyebrows worked more than those of anyone that I have ever seen. His complaints were those of a spoiled child. At times he threw down the dice, flew into a rage, stamped, bit his dice-box and abused me. These fits of violence had a limit. When I had acquired a better game, I led the battle as I pleased; I arranged it so that at the end it should all be very nearly equal, by letting him win the first half of the game, and recovering the balance during the second half. The count would have been less astonished at the end of the world than at his pupil's rapid superiority; but he never acknowledged it. The unvarying issue of our games was fresh food for his ingenuity.

"Decidedly," he said, "my poor head is tired. You always win toward the end of the game, because I then lose my resources."

The countess, who knew the game, found out my manœuvre the first time, and recognized therein

tokens of great affection. These details can only be appreciated by those who know the dreadful difficulties of backgammon. How much was told in this little thing! But love, like the God of Bossuet, sets the poor man's glass of water, the effort of the soldier who dies ignored, above the most splendid victories. The countess gave me those dumb thanks that break a youthful heart; she gave me the look that she kept for her children! After that blissful evening, she always looked at me when speaking to me. I cannot describe the state I was in upon leaving. My soul had absorbed my body, I weighed nothing, I was not walking at all, I was flying. I could feel that glance within me, it had inundated me with light, just as her *Adieu, monsieur!* had reëchoed in my heart the harmonies contained in the *O filii! O filiæ!* of the paschal resurrection. A new life was dawning for me. Then I was something to her! I fell asleep amid swathes of purple. Flames passed before my closed eyes, pursuing each other into the darkness like the pretty worms of fire running after one another over the ashes of burnt paper. In my dreams, her voice became something indescribably palpable, an atmosphere which enveloped me in light and perfume, a melody which caressed my imagination. The next day, her welcome expressed the fulness of conceded consciousness and from that moment I was initiated into the secrets of her voice. That day was to be one of the most memorable in my life.

After dinner, we went for a walk upon the heights,

over a plain where nothing could thrive, the soil was stony and parched, without mould; nevertheless, there were a few oak trees and some bushes covered with wild plums; but instead of grass, there stretched a carpet of wild, woolly mosses, illumined by the rays of the setting sun, and slippery to the feet. I was holding Madeleine by the hand to support her, and Madame de Mortsauf was giving her arm to Jacques. The count, who was walking in front, turned round, struck the ground with his cane, and said to me in an awful tone:

"That is my life!—Oh! but before I knew you," he continued, looking apologetically at his wife.

Too late a reparation; the countess had turned pale. What woman would not have faltered as she did at receiving such a blow?

"What delicious scents there are here, and beautiful effects of light!" I cried. "I would gladly have this moor for my own, I might perhaps find some treasures by boring; but the most reliable wealth would be your vicinity. Who, moreover, would not pay a high price for a view so pleasing to the eye, and for that serpentine river where the spirit steeps itself between the ash-trees and the alders? See the difference in tastes! To you, this spot of ground is waste land; to me, it is a paradise."

She thanked me with a look.

"Romance!" he remarked in a bitter tone, "This is not the life for a man of your name." Then he broke off and said:

"Do you hear the bells of Azay? I can positively hear the bells ringing."

Madame de Mortsauf looked at me in alarm, Madeleine squeezed my hand.

"Shall we return for a game of backgammon?" I said to him. "The sound of the dice will prevent you from hearing the bells."

We returned to Clochegourde, talking by fits and starts. The count complained of sharp pains without specifying them. When we were in the salon, there was an indefinable suspense over us all. The count had sunk into an armchair, rapt in a fit of musing which was respected by his wife, who understood the symptoms of the malady and knew how to meet the attack. I imitated her silence. If she did not beg me to go away, it was perhaps because she thought the game of backgammon might enliven the count and divert these fatal nervous susceptibilities the outbursts of which were killing her. Nothing was more difficult than to get the count to play this game of backgammon, which he usually liked so much. Like a petite-maîtresse, he wanted to be entreated, urged, so as not to look as if he were being forced, perhaps for the very reason that he was. If, in pursuance of an interesting conversation, I was for a moment forgetful of my solicitations, he became sulky, harsh, offensive, and chafed at the conversation while contradicting everything that was said. Warned by his bad temper, I proposed a game; then, he coquetted: "In the first place it was too late," he said, "and

then I did not care about it." In short, ungovernable affectations, as with women who end by making one ignorant of their real desires. I humbled myself, I begged him to support me in a science which was so easily forgotten for want of practice. This time, I had to assume an immoderate gayety to induce him to play. He complained of giddiness which would prevent him from calculating, his skull was as tight as if it were in a vice, he could hear hissings, he was stifling, and heaving great sighs. Finally he consented to sit down at the table. Madame de Mortsauf left us to put her children to bed and to say the household prayers. All went well during her absence; I contrived that Monsieur de Mortsauf should win, and his delight cheered him up all at once. The sudden transition from a melancholy which wrung from him sinister predictions about himself, to the joy of a drunken man, to this wild and almost senseless laughter, alarmed and chilled me. I had never seen him in any attack that was so openly betrayed. Our intimate acquaintance had borne its fruits; he no longer stood on ceremony with me. Each day, he tried to envelop me in his tyranny, to secure some fresh food for his temper, for it really seems as if moral maladies were creatures possessing appetites and instincts, desiring to augment the extent of their dominion, just as a proprietor wishes to increase his estate.

The countess came down, drawing near to the backgammon table to obtain more light upon her

tapestry, but she sat down at her frame in ill-concealed apprehension. An unlucky throw, which I could not prevent, changed the count's face; it turned from cheerfulness to gloom; from purple to yellow, his eyes wavered. Then befell a final misfortune which I could neither anticipate nor retrieve. Monsieur de Mortsauf threw a crushing die which settled his defeat. He immediately got up, threw the board at me, overturned the lamp, struck the console with his fist, and bounced—I cannot say walked—out of the salon. The torrent of abuse, curses, reproaches and incoherent sentences that issued from his mouth would have led one to believe in some old time possession, as in the Middle Ages. Imagine my position!

'Go into the garden," she said, pressing my hand.

I went out without the count observing my disappearance. From the terrace, to which I slowly wended my way, I could hear his outbursts and lamentations coming from his room adjoining the dining-room. Athwart the tempest, I could also hear the angel voice which, every now and then, ascended like a nightingale's song as the rain is about to cease. I walked up and down under the acacias on the loveliest night of the dying August, waiting for the countess to rejoin me. She would come, her gesture had promised it.

For some days, an explanation had been hovering between us, and it seemed as if it must burst out at the first word that should start the overflowing source within our hearts. What shame was it that

delayed the hour of our understanding? Perhaps she, as much as I, loved that thrill resembling the emotions of fear, which deadens sensibility, during those moments in which one keeps back the life which is on the point of breaking forth, in which one hesitates at unveiling one's soul, in obedience to the same feeling of modesty which agitates young girls before they reveal themselves to the beloved husband. By our accumulated thoughts we had ourselves enhanced this first confidence, now become indispensable. An hour passed. I was sitting on the brick balustrade, when the echo of her footsteps, mingled with the undulating sound of the fluttering dress, stirred the calm night air. There are sensations for which the heart does not suffice.

"Monsieur de Mortsauf is now asleep," she said. "When he is like this, I give him a cup of water into which are infused a few poppy heads, and the fits are far enough apart for this simple remedy always to have the same virtue. Monsieur," she said, changing her tone and assuming her most persuasive inflection of voice, "an unfortunate accident has betrayed to you secrets that have been hitherto carefully guarded, promise me to bury the memory of this scene within your heart. Do it for me, I entreat you. I do not ask for any oath, say the *yes* of a man of honor and I shall be satisfied."

"Is there any need for me to pronounce that *yes?*" I said. "Have we never understood each other?"

"Do not judge Monsieur de Mortsauf unfavorably in

seeing the effects of prolonged sufferings undergone during the emigration," she continued. "To-morrow, he will be absolutely unconscious of the things he has said, and you will find him good and kind."

"Madame," I replied, "stop trying to justify the count, I will do all that you wish. I would this moment throw myself into the Indre, if by so doing I could renovate Monsieur de Mortsauf, and give you back to a happy life. The only thing that I cannot remodel is my opinion, nothing is so strongly woven within me. I would give you my life, I cannot give you my conscience; I need not listen to it, but can I prevent it from speaking? Now, in my opinion, Monsieur de Mortsauf is—"

"I understand you," she said, interrupting me with unusual bluntness, "you are right. The count is as nervous as a petite-maîtresse," she continued, as if to soften the idea of madness by softening the word, "but he is only like this at intervals, at most once a year, in the height of summer. How many evils the emigration has caused! How many fine lives ruined! He would have been, I am sure, a grand warrior, an honor to his country."

"I know it," I said, interrupting her in turn, and giving her to understand that it was useless to deceive me.

She stopped, laid one of her hands on her forehead, and said:

"Who is it, then, that has thus brought you into our home? Can it be that God wishes to send me help,

a strong friendship to sustain me?" she resumed, leaning her hand upon mine with emphasis, "for you are good, generous—"

She raised her eyes to Heaven, as if to invoke some visible token that should confirm her secret hopes, then turned them back upon me. Electrified by this look which was shedding a soul into mine, I was guilty, according to worldly precedents, of want of tact; but, with some people, is it not often gallant precipitation before danger, desire to forestall a shock, fear of a misfortune which does not happen, and is it not still oftener a sudden interrogation of a heart, a blow struck to find out whether it resounds in unison? Several thoughts arose within me like lights, and counselled me to clear away the stain that was soiling my candor, just as I was expecting complete initiation.

"Before going any further," I said, in a voice faltering from the throbs that could easily be heard in the profound silence in which we were, "will you let me purify a memory of the past?"

"Hush!" she said, hastily, putting to my lips a finger which she immediately removed. She looked at me proudly, as a woman too loftily situated to be touched by insult, and said in troubled tones:

"I know what you would say. It is about the first, the last, the only insult that I have ever received! Never mention that ball. If the Christian has forgiven you, the woman still suffers."

"Do not be more pitiless than God," I said, keeping back the tears which came to my eyes.

"I ought to be more stern, I am weaker," she replied.

"But," I continued, in a childishly rebellious manner, "listen, even if it should be for the first, the last, and the only time in your life."

"Well, then!" she said, "speak! otherwise you will think that I am afraid to hear you."

Feeling then that this moment was unique in our existence, I told her, in an accent commanding attention, that the women at the ball had all left me indifferent like those that I had hitherto seen, but that upon seeing her, I whose life was so studious, whose soul was so timid, I had been as if carried away by a frenzy which could only be condemned by those who had never experienced it, that never had heart of man been so thoroughly filled with the desire which no being understands and which conquers all, even death—"

"And contempt?" she said, stopping me.

"Did you despise me then?" I asked.

"Do not let us talk any more about these things," she said.

"But let us talk about them!" I replied, with an exaltation caused by a superhuman sorrow. "It is a question of my whole self, of my secret life, of a secret that you must know; otherwise, I shall die of despair! Does it not also concern you, who, without knowing it, have been the Lady in whose hands glitters the crown promised to the victors in the tourney?"

I told her of my childhood and youth, not as I

have told it to you, judging it from a distance of time, but with all the passionate words of a youth whose wounds are still fresh. My voice rang like the axe of a woodcutter in a forest. With a great crash there fell before her the dead years, the long sufferings which had covered them with leafless branches. In fevered words I depicted a crowd of terrible details which I have spared you. I spread forth the treasure of my radiant vows, the virgin gold of my desires, all the fiery heart preserved beneath the frosts of those alps that continual winter had accumulated. When, bowed beneath the weight of my sufferings, retold with the coals of Isaiah, I awaited some words from this woman who was listening to me with bent head, she lightened the darkness with a look, she quickened the terrestrial and heavenly words with a single word.

"We have had the same childhood!" she said, turning upon me a countenance on which glowed the halo of martyrs.

After a pause during which our souls united in the same comforting thought: "Then I was not alone in my suffering!" the countess told me, in the voice she kept for her beloved little ones, how she had been in the wrong for being a girl when the sons were dead. She explained to me the distinctions between her miseries in her position of a daughter constantly attached to a mother's side and those of a child thrown into the world of colleges. My loneliness had been paradise, compared to the contact of the grindstone beneath which her heart was cease-

lessly bruised, until the day when her real mother, her good aunt had saved her by taking her away from this torture, the recurring agonies of which she related to me. There were inexplicable bickerings, unbearable to nervous natures who do not flinch before the blow of a dagger but who die beneath the sword of Damocles; now it was some grateful expansion checked by an icy order, now a kiss received with coldness, silence alternately imposed and upbraided; suppressed tears which weighed upon her heart; in short, the thousand tyrannies of the convent, hidden from the eyes of strangers under the semblance of a gloriously exalted maternity. Her mother took pride in her, and boasted of it; but the next day she paid dearly for the flattery that was indispensable to the triumph of the instructress. When, by dint of obedience and gentleness, she fancied she had conquered the mother's heart and that she could unbosom herself to her, the tyrant would reappear armed with these confidences. A spy would not have been so cowardly or so treacherous. All her girlish pleasures, all her holidays, had been sold to her dearly, for she was scolded for having been happy, as she would have been for some fault. Never had she been taught the precepts of her noble education with love, but with offensive irony. She bore no sort of grudge against her mother, she only blamed herself for loving her less than she feared her. Perhaps, this angel would think, these severities were necessary; had they not fitted her for her present life? While listening

to her, it seemed to me that the harp of Job from which I had drawn such wild strains, being now touched by Christian fingers, responded to them by singing the litanies of the Virgin at the foot of the cross.

"We lived in the same sphere before we found each other here, you from the East and I from the West."

She shook her head with a hopeless movement:

"The East for you, the West for me!" she said. "You will live to be happy, I shall die of sorrow! Men create for themselves the issues of their lives, and mine is fixed for ever. No power can break that heavy chain to which the woman is bound by a gold ring, the emblem of a wife's purity."

Feeling then that we were twins of the same womb, she did not conceive that secrets should be told by halves between brothers steeped in the same sources. After the sigh natural to unsullied hearts at the moment of opening, she told me of the early days of her marriage, her first deceptions, all the *springtime* of unhappiness. Like myself, she knew that trifling acts seem great to minds whose limpid substance is entirely stirred at the least shock, in the same way that a stone thrown into a lake ruffles both the surface and the depth. When she married, she possessed her savings, that small amount of money which represents the glad times, the thousand longings of childhood; in a day of distress, she had generously given it without saying that it comprised souvenirs and not pieces of gold; her husband had

never thanked her for them, he did not know himself to be her debtor! In return for this treasure engulfed in the dormant waters of oblivion, she had not obtained that dewy glance which balances all, which to generous souls is like an eternal jewel the gleams of which shine in times of trial. How she had gone from sorrow to sorrow! Monsieur de Mortsauf would forget to give her the necessary money for the household; he would rouse himself from some dream when, after having overcome her womanly timidity, she used to ask him for any; and never once had he spared her these cruel pangs! What terror came upon her when the morbid nature of this ruined man was revealed! She had been crushed by the first outburst of his mad rages. How many painful reflections had she not gone through before admitting the nullity of her husband, that commanding figure which sways the existence of a wife! What horrible calamities followed upon her two confinements! What shock at the sight of the two still-born children? What courage to be able to say to herself: "I will breathe life into them! I will give new birth to them every day!" Then what despair at feeling an obstacle in the heart and hand from whence women derive their assistance! She had seen this immense misery unrolling its thorny savannahs at each difficulty vanquished. At the summit of each cliff, she had seen fresh deserts to be crossed, until the day when she should have thoroughly understood her husband, the constitution of her children, and the country in which

she was to live; until the day when, like the child snatched by Napoléon from the tender cares of the home, she had inured her feet to marching in the mud and snow, accustomed her forehead to the bullets, her whole person to the passive obedience of the soldier. These things that I am recapitulating to you, she then described to me in all their dark extent, with their train of sad occurrences, of conjugal battles lost, of fruitless endeavors.

"In short," she said in conclusion, "you would have to live here several months to know how much trouble the improvements of Clochegourde cost me, how much fatiguing wheedling to make him consent to the thing most useful to his own interests! What childish malice takes possession of him when anything due to my advice does not at first succeed! with what delight he attributes what is good to himself! what patience I need to be ever listening to complaints when I tire myself to death cheering his hours, embalming the air he breathes, gravelling and decking the paths that he has sown with stones! My reward is this terrible refrain: "I am going to die! life is a burden!" If he has the pleasure of visitors, all is forgotten, he is gracious and polite. Why is he not so to his family? I cannot account for this want of fairness in a man who at times is really chivalrous. He is capable of secretly going full speed to fetch me an ornament from Paris, as he did lately for the ball in the town. Stingy about the household, he would be extravagant for me, did I

wish it. It should be the reverse; I need nothing, and his establishment is expensive. In wishing to make his life happy, and without reflecting that I might become a mother, I have perhaps accustomed him to taking me as his victim; I who, by the use of a little coaxing would be able to lead him like a child, if I could stoop to play a rôle which seems to me disgraceful! But the interests of the house oblige me to be as calm and stern as a statue of Justice, and yet, I too, have an unreserved and tender heart!"

"Why," said I, "do you not use that influence in making yourself mistress of him, so as to govern him?"

"Were it a question of myself only, I should be able to conquer neither his obtuse silence, opposed for hours together to sound arguments, nor answer his illogical remarks, his really childish reasons. I have no courage before weakness or childishness; they can strike me without resistance; perhaps I might oppose force to force, but I am spiritless against those whom I pity. If it were necessary to compel Madeleine to do anything in order to save her, I should die with her. Pity relaxes all my heart-strings and slackens my nerves. The violent shocks too of the past ten years have crushed me; now, my sensibility, so often assailed, is sometimes without consistence, nothing regenerates it; sometimes the strength with which I used to bear the storms, fails me. Yes, sometimes I am conquered. I shall perish for want of rest and sea baths in which I might

strengthen my fibres. Monsieur de Mortsauf will have killed me, and he will pine away at my death."

"Why do you not leave Clochegourde for a few months? Why do you not go, with your children, to the seaside?"

"In the first place, Monsieur de Mortsauf would feel lost if I went away. Although he will not believe in his condition, he is conscious of it. In him are to be met both the man and the invalid, two different natures whose contradictions account for many eccentricities! Then he would have reason to tremble. All would go wrong here. You may have observed me as the mother of a family absorbed in protecting her children from the kite that hovers over them. A crushing task, augmented by the attentions exacted by Monsieur de Mortsauf, who always goes about asking: "where is Madame?" That is nothing, I am also tutor to Jacques, and governess to Madeleine. Still that is nothing. I am steward and bailiff. You will one day understand the import of my words when you find out that the management of an estate is here the most fatiguing of arts. We have but a small cash income, our farms are cultivated on half profits, a system requiring continual supervision. It is necessary to sell one's own grain, animals, and crops of every kind. For competitors we have our own farmers, who come to terms at the tavern with the consumers, and settle the prices after having been the first to sell. I should bore you if I were to explain the thousand difficulties of our agriculture. However great my zeal, I cannot watch to see that

our farmers do not improve their own lands with our manure; I can neither go and see whether our reapers are in collusion with them at the time of the distribution of the crops, nor tell the opportune moment for sale. Now, if you come to think of Monsieur de Mortsauf's weak memory, of the trouble you have seen me take to make him think of his duties, you will understand the heaviness of my burden, and the impossibility of laying it aside for a moment. Were I to go away, we should be ruined. Nobody would listen to him; the greater part of the time, his orders are inconsistent; besides, nobody loves him, he is too much of a grumbler, and shows too much of the despot; then, like all weak persons, he listens too readily to his inferiors to inspire those around him with the affection that links a household together. If I were to go, not one of the servants would stay here a week. So you see that I am as much a fixture at Clochegourde as are these leaden bouquets on our roof. I have had no mental reservation with you, monsieur. The whole country is unaware of the secrets of Clochegourde, and now you know them. Say nothing but what is good and kind about them and you will have my esteem, my gratitude," she added further in a softened voice. "On those terms, you may always come back to Clochegourde, and you will meet with friendly hearts."

"But," I said, "I have never suffered! You only—"

"No," she resumed, with a cold smile, "do not let this disclosure astonish you, it shows you life

as it is, and not as your imagination has led you to hope. We all have our faults and our good qualities. Had I married some spendthrift, he would have ruined me. Had I been given to some young man, ardent and voluptuous, he would have had successes, I might perhaps not have known how to keep him, he would have abandoned me, and I should have died of jealousy. I am jealous!" she said with an accent of exaltation like a peal of thunder in a dying storm. "Well, Monsieur de Mortsauf loves me as much as he is capable of loving; all that his heart contains of affection he pours out at my feet, as the Madeleine emptied the remainder of her perfumes at the feet of the Saviour. Depend upon it! a life of love is a fatal exception to the terrestrial law; all flowers perish, and great joys have an evil morrow, when they have a morrow. The true life is one of anguish; its image is in this nettle, grown at the foot of this terrace, and which, without sun, remains green upon its stalk. Here, as in the countries of the North, there are smiles in the sky, rare, it is true, but which well repay the sufferings. After all, do not the women who are exclusively mothers attach themselves through the sacrifices rather than through the pleasures? Here, I draw down upon myself the storms that I see about to burst upon the servants or my children, and in averting them I experience an indescribable feeling which gives me a secret strength. The resignation of the day before has always paved the way for that of the morrow. Besides God does not leave me en-

tirely without hope. If at first my children's health disheartened me, now, the older they grow, the better they are. After all, our home is improved, our fortune restored. Who knows whether through me the old age of Monsieur de Mortsauf may not be happy? Depend upon it! the being who presents himself before the great Judge, bearing a green palm, and bringing to Him comforted those who cursed life, that being will have converted his sorrows into delights. If my sufferings help the happiness of the family, are they really sufferings?"

"Yes," I said, "but they were necessary as were mine in order to teach one to appreciate the flavor of the fruit ripened upon our rocks; now, perhaps we shall taste it together, perhaps we shall admire its wonders, those torrents of affection with which it inundates the soul, that sap which revives the yellowing leaves. Then life is no more a burden, it no longer belongs to us—My God! do you not understand me?" I continued, using the mystic language to which our religious education had accustomed us. "Consider the way by which we have come toward each other; what magnet has guided us over the ocean of bitter waters, toward the source of sweet water, flowing at the foot of the mountains over sparkling sand, between two green and flowery banks. Have we not, like the Magi, followed the same star? Here we are before the cradle from which awakes a divine child who will shoot his arrows into the face of the naked trees, who will reanimate the world for us with his joyous cries, who

by continual pleasures will impart some zest to life, restore to the nights their sleep, to the days their gayety. Who then every year has been tightening new bonds between us? Are we not more than brother and sister? Do not ever loosen that which Heaven has united. The sufferings of which you speak were the seeds scattered in abundance by the hand of the sower so as to produce the harvest already gilded by the most beautiful of suns. Come! come! Shall we not go together and gather it all ear by ear? What a spirit is within me, that I dare speak to you so! Answer me then! or I will never cross the Indre again."

"You have spared me the word *love*," she said, interrupting me in a stern voice, "but you speak of a feeling that I know nothing of, and which is not lawful for me. You are a child, I forgive you once more, but for the last time. You must know, monsieur, that my heart is as if intoxicated with maternity! I do not love Monsieur de Mortsauf through any social duty, nor through any motive of the eternal bliss to be gained, but through an irresistible feeling which binds him to all the fibres of my heart. Was I coerced into my marriage? It was settled by my sympathy for the unfortunate. Did it not lay with the women to atone for the evils of the times, to comfort those who rushed into the breach and returned wounded? What am I to say to you? I felt an indescribably selfish satisfaction in seeing that you amused him; is not that pure maternity? Has not my confession sufficiently shown you the

three children whom I must never fail, upon whom I must sprinkle a refreshing dew and cause my spirit to shine, without allowing the least particle to deteriorate? Do not embitter a mother's milk! Although the wife in me may be invulnerable, do not speak to me in this way again. If you do not respect this very simple prohibition, I warn you that admission into this house will be for ever denied you. I used to believe in pure friendships, in voluntary fraternity, which is safer than compulsory fraternity. All illusion! I wished for a friend who should not be a judge, a friend to listen to me in those moments of weakness wherein the voice that reproaches is a deadly voice, a good friend with whom I should have nothing to fear. Youth is noble, without falsehood, capable of sacrifice, disinterested; when I saw your persistence, I believed, I confess, in some design of Heaven; I believed that I should have a soul that would be for myself alone just as a priest belongs to all, a heart into which I could pour out all my sorrows when they are overwhelming, cry, when my cries are irresistible and would choke me did I continue to suppress them. In this way my existence, so valuable to these children, might have been prolonged until Jacques had become a man. But perhaps that is being too selfish? Can Petrarch's Laura be again renewed? I was mistaken. God does not will it. I must die at my post, like the lonely soldier. My confessor is rough, austere; and—my aunt is dead."

Two great tears lightened by a moonbeam fell from her eyes, rolled down her cheeks, and reached the bottom; but I stretched out my hand just in time to catch them, and drank them with a pious avidity excited by those words that were already signed with ten years of secret tears, wasted sensitiveness, constant cares, perpetual alarms, the most exalted heroism of your sex! She looked at me with an air of mild amazement.

"This," I said, "is the first, the holy communion of love. Yes, I have just partaken of your sorrows, and united myself with your soul, as we become united with Christ by drinking His Divine substance. To love without hope is still happiness. Ah! what woman upon earth could have given me so great a joy as I have had in drinking these tears! I accept this contract which can only result in suffering to myself. I give myself to you unreservedly, and will be whatever you wish me to be."

She stopped me with a gesture, and said in her deep voice:

"I consent to this compact, if you will never strain the links that bind us together."

"Yes," I said, "but the less you grant, the more securely must I possess."

"You begin with mistrust," she replied, conveying the sadness of doubt.

"No, but with unalloyed delight. Listen! I want some name for you which shall belong to no one else, as should the feeling that we consecrate to each other."

"That is a great deal," she said, "but I am less mean than you think. Monsieur de Mortsauf calls me Blanche. Only one person in the world, the one I loved best, my lovely aunt, used to call me Henriette. So I will be once more Henriette for you."

I took her hand and kissed it. She yielded it to me with that confidence which renders woman so superior to ourselves, a confidence which overwhelms us. She leaned upon the brick balustrade and looked at the Indre.

"Are you not wrong, my friend," she said, "to go to the end of the course at the first leap? At your first draught you have exhausted the cup held out in sincerity. But a true feeling is not to be divided, it must be whole, or it does not exist. Monsieur de Mortsauf," she said after a moment's silence, "is above all things loyal and proud. Perhaps you might be tempted, for my sake, to forget what he has said; if he knows nothing about it, I myself to-morrow will inform him of it. Let some time elapse without showing yourself at Clochegourde, he will respect you all the more. Next Sunday, coming out of church, he will go up to you himself; I know him, he will blot out his faults and will like you for having treated him as a man who is responsible for his words and actions."

"Five days without seeing you, without hearing you!"

"Never put such warmth into what you say to me," she said.

Twice we walked up and down the terrace in

silence. Then she said in a tone of command which showed me how she was taking possession of my soul:

"It is late, we must separate."

I tried to kiss her hand, she hesitated, gave it me and said in a beseeching voice:

"Do not take it unless I give it to you, leave me my free-will; if not, I should be a thing belonging to you, and that must not be."

"Good-bye," I said.

I left by the small door from below, which she opened for me. Just as she was about to close it, she opened it again, and held out her hand, saying:

"Indeed, you have been very good to-night, you have comforted my whole future; take it, my friend, take it!"

I kissed her hand again and again; and, when I raised my eyes, I saw tears in hers. She went back to the terrace, and looked at me again for a moment across the meadow. When I reached the path to Frapesle, I once more saw her white dress glistening in the moonlight; then, a few seconds later, a light illumined her room.

"Oh! my Henriette!" I said to myself, "to you is given the purest love that has ever shone upon earth!"

I got back to Frapesle, turning round at every step. I felt within me I know not what unutterable content. A brilliant career was at last unfolding itself before the devotion that swells every youthful heart, and which, with me, had been so long an inert force!

Like the priest who, by a single step, advances into a new life, I was consecrated, dedicated. A mere "Yes, madame!" had bound me to keep for myself alone an overpowering love in my heart, never to impose upon friendship in order to lead this woman gently into love. Within me were sounding the confused voices of all the lofty sentiments awakened. Before returning to the confinement of a room, I wanted to linger voluptuously beneath the star-sown azure, again to listen inwardly to the strains of the wounded dove, to the simple tones of this guileless confidence, to summon up in the air the perfumes of that soul, all of which were to come to me. How great she seemed to me, this woman, with her consummate forgetfulness of *self*, her saintly bearing with injured, weak or suffering beings, and her devotion lightened of the legal fetters! She was there, serene upon her stake of martyr and saint! I was admiring her face, which appeared to me in the midst of the darkness, when I suddenly fancied I could divine a meaning in her words, a mysterious significance which made her seem wholly sublime to me. Perhaps she wanted me to be to her what she was to her little world; perhaps she wanted to draw her strength and comfort from me, placing me thus in her sphere, upon her own footing or higher. The stars, so say some bold constructors of the universe, impart light and movement to each other in this way. This thought suddenly uplifted me to ethereal heights. I found myself back in the heaven of my old dreams, and I solved the sorrows

of my childhood in the immense happiness in which I was floating.

Tear-quenched spirits, unrequited hearts, saintly, unknown Clarissa Harlowes, repudiated children, innocent outcasts, all of you who have entered life by its deserts, you who have everywhere met with chilling faces, locked hearts, sealed ears, never pity yourselves! You alone can know joy in its infinitude when for you a heart uncloses, an ear hearkens, a glance responds. A single day wipes out the evil days. The pangs, the meditations, the hopelessness, the melancholy passed but not forgotten, are so many links whereby the soul fastens itself to the confiding soul.

Mistress of our repressed desires, a woman then inherits the sighs and the lost loves, she restores ennobled all the betrayed affections, she explains the previous sorrows as being the compensation exacted by fate for the eternal blissfulness she bestows upon the soul's betrothal day. The angels alone utter the new name by which this holy love should be called, in the same way as you, beloved martyrs, will well know what Madame de Mortsauf suddenly became to me, poor and alone!

*

This scene took place one Tuesday ; I waited until Sunday without crossing the Indre in my walks. During these five days, great events happened at Clochegourde. The count received the commission of Brigadier-General, the cross of Saint-Louis, and a pension of four thousand francs. The Duc de Lenoncourt-Givry, appointed a peer of France, recovered two forests, resumed his duty at court, and his wife came into her unsold estates which had formed part of the domain of the Imperial crown. Thus the Comtesse de Mortsauf became one of the richest heiresses of Maine. Her mother had just brought her one hundred thousand francs saved out of the revenues of Givry, the amount of her dowry which had never been paid, and which the count never mentioned, in spite of his distress. In the things of outward life, the conduct of this man attested the proudest disinterestedness. By adding his savings to this sum, the count was able to buy two neighboring estates which were worth about nine thousand francs a year. As his son was to succeed to his grandfather's peerage, he suddenly thought of establishing an entail which should consist of the ter-

ritorial wealth of both families without injuring Madeleine, who, through the influence of the Duc de Lenoncourt would doubtless make a good marriage. These arrangements and this good luck shed some balm upon the emigrant's wounds. The Duchesse de Lenoncourt at Clochegourde was an event in the country. I reflected mournfully that this woman was a grande dame, and then I beheld in her daughter the spirit of caste which in my eyes veiled the nobility of her feelings. What was I, poor as I was, with no other prospect than my courage and my faculties? I never thought of the consequences of the Restoration either for myself, or for others.

On Sunday, from the private chapel where I sat in church with Monsieur, Madame de Chessel and the Abbé de Quélus, I cast hungry looks into another side chapel where the duchess and her daughter, the count and the children were. The straw hat which hid my idol from me did not waver, and this oblivion of myself seemed to attract me more keenly than all the past. This great Henriette de Lenoncourt, now my beloved Henriette, whose life I longed to deck with flowers, was praying fervently; faith imparted to her attitude an indescribable lowliness and prostration, the pose of a religious statue, which touched me deeply.

According to the custom of village curacies, vespers were to be said some time after mass. Upon coming out of church, Madame de Chessel naturally proposed that her neighbors should spend the two hours' interval at Frapesle, instead of cross-

ing the Indre and the meadow twice in the heat. The invitation was accepted. Monsieur de Chessel gave his arm to the duchess, Madame de Chessel took that of the count, I offered mine to the countess, and for the first time I felt this beautiful cool arm at my side. During the return from the parish church to Frapesle, a walk which led through the woods of Saché where the light filtering through the leaves upon the gravelled paths produced those pretty touches resembling painted silk, I had sensations of pride and thoughts which gave me violent palpitations.

"What is the matter?" she said after walking a few steps in a silence that I dared not break, "Your heart beats too fast—"

"I have heard of events which bring you good fortune," I said, "and, like all who love well, I have vague fears. Will not your grandeur injure your friendships?"

"I?" she said, "fie! Another such idea, and I should not despise you, I should have forgotten you for ever."

I looked at her, possessed by a rapture which must have been infectious.

"We profit by favor of the laws that we have neither promoted nor solicited, but we shall be neither beggars nor greedy; besides, you know very well," she continued, "that neither Monsieur de Mortsauf nor myself can leave Clochegourde. By my advice, he has refused the command in the Red House to which he was entitled. It is enough for us that my

father should have his post! Our unnatural moderation," she said, with a bitter smile, "has already been of great use to our child. The king, upon whom my father is in attendance, has very graciously said that he will carry over to Jacques the favor that we have declined. The education of Jacques, which has to be considered, is now the subject of a serious discussion; he will represent two houses, the Lenoncourts and the Mortsaufs. I can but have ambition for him, and so now my anxieties are increased. Not only must Jacques live, but he must also grow to be worthy of his name, two obligations which thwart each other. Hitherto, I have been able to give him sufficient education by proportioning the studies to his powers, but, to begin with, where am I to find a tutor who suits me? Then, later on, what friend will guard him for me in that horrible Paris, where all is a snare for the soul and a danger to the body? My friend," she said in a voice of emotion, "to look at your brow and eyes, who would not know you to be one of those birds who must live in the heights? Take your flight, be one day the guardian of our dear child. Go to Paris; if your brother and your father do not help you at all, our family, particularly my mother, who possesses a genius for affairs, would certainly be very influential; profit by our credit! Then you will lack neither countenance nor assistance in the profession that you select! so invest all the superfluity of your powers in an exalted ambition."

"I understand you," I said, interrupting her, "my ambition will become my mistress. I do not need this to become wholly yours. No, I will not be rewarded for my good behavior here by favors yonder. I will go, I will become great alone, by myself. I would accept all from you; from others I wish nothing."

"Childishness!" she said in a whisper, but with an ill-concealed smile of satisfaction.

"Besides, I have dedicated myself," I said. "In meditating upon our position, I have thought of attaching myself to you by bonds that can never be undone."

She trembled slightly and stopped to look at me.

"What do you mean?" she said, allowing the two couples who were preceding us to go on, and keeping her children beside her.

"Well," I replied, "tell me frankly how you wish me to love you."

"Love me as did my aunt, whose rights I gave you by authorizing you to call me by the name which she had chosen for herself from amongst my names."

"Then I will love without hope, with complete devotion. Well then, yes, I will do for you what man does for God. Have you not asked it? I will enter a seminary, I will leave it a priest, and I will bring up Jacques. Your Jacques will be like another me: political conceptions, thought, energy, patience, I will give him all. In this way, I shall live close to you, without my love—set in religion like a silver image in crystal—being suspected. You need fear

none of that violent ardor which lays hold of a man and by which I have once already allowed myself to be overcome. I will waste away in the flame, and will love you with a purified love."

She turned pale, and said in hurried words:

"Félix, do not involve yourself in any ties which, some day, would be an obstacle to your happiness. I should die of grief at having been the cause of this suicide. Child, is then the hopelessness of love a vocation? Wait for the trials of life before you judge of life; I insist upon it, I command it. Wed neither the church nor a woman, do not marry in any way, I forbid it. Remain free. You are one and twenty. You hardly know what the future holds for you. Heavens! have I misjudged you? And yet, I have thought that two months was enough in which to know certain people."

"What is your hope?" I said, flashing lightning from my eyes.

"My friend, accept my help, train yourself, be successful and you will know what my hope is. In short," she said, apparently betraying a secret, "never release Madeleine's hand, which you are at this moment holding." She had bent toward my ear to say these words, which proved how much she was engrossed in my future.

"Madeleine?" I said, "never!"

These two words threw us back into a silence full of agitation. Our minds were a prey to those upheavals which furrow them in such a way as to leave eternal traces. We were in sight of a wooden

door which led into the park of Frapesle, and it seems to me as if I yet can see its two decayed pilasters covered with creepers and moss, with weeds and briars.

All of a sudden an idea, that of the count's death, flashed like an arrow through my brain, and I said:

"I understand you."

"That is a good thing," she replied, in a tone which showed me that I was attributing a thought to her which she would never have had.

Her purity wrung from me a tear of admiration which the selfishness of passion much embittered. Looking into my own heart, I reflected that she did not love me enough to desire her freedom. So long as love shrinks from crime, it seems to us to have limits, and love should be infinite. I had a terrible contraction of the heart.

"She does not love me!" I thought.

To hide what was in my mind, I kissed Madeleine's hair.

"I am afraid of your mother," I said to the countess by way of resuming conversation.

"And I too," she replied with a gesture full of childishness, "but remember always to address her as madame la duchesse and to speak to her in the third person. Young people of the present day have lost the habit of these polite formalities, do you revive them; do this for me. Besides, it is such good taste to show respect to women, whatever their age, and to recognize social distinctions without question! Is not the honor that you show to established superior-

ity the guarantee for that which is owing to yourself? Everything in society is federative. The Cardinal de la Rovère and Raphaël d'Urbin were once two equally revered powers. In your colleges you have imbibed the milk of the Revolution, and your political ideas may be thereby affected; but, as you grow older, you will find out how the principles of a badly defined liberty are powerless to create the happiness of nations. Before reflecting, as a Lenoncourt, as to what an aristocracy is or should be, my common sense as a peasant tells me that societies only exist by hierarchy. You are at a time of life when one must make a good choice! Follow your own party. Particularly," she added, laughing, "when it triumphs."

I was deeply touched by these words in which political penetration was hidden beneath the warmth of affection, a combination which gives women so great a power of fascination; they all know how to lend the forms of sentiment to the most pointed arguments. It seemed as if, in her desire to justify the count's actions, Henriette had anticipated the reflections that would arise in my mind when, for the first time, I saw the effects of toadyism. Monsieur de Mortsauf, king in his castle, encircled by his historic halo had assumed imposing proportions in my eyes, and I confess that I was singularly astonished at the distance he established between the duchess and himself by manners that were at least obsequious. A slave has his vanity, he will obey none but the greatest of despots; I felt as if humiliated

myself to see the abjection of him who made me tremble by dominating all my love. This inward impression enabled me to understand the agony of those women whose noble minds are yoked to that of a man whose meannesses they bury daily. Respect is a barrier which protects both high and low, each from his own side can look the other in the face. I was respectful to the duchess because of my youth; but, where others saw a duchess, I beheld the mother of my Henriette and invested my homage with a kind of piety. We entered the big courtyard of Frapesle, where we found the party. The Comte de Mortsauf presented me very graciously to the duchess, who scrutinized me with an air of coldness and reserve. Madame de Lenoncourt was then a woman of fifty-six, perfectly preserved and with stately manners. When I saw her hard blue eye, her furrowed temples, her thin, emaciated face, her straight commanding figure, her rare gestures, her tawny whiteness which was repeated so conspicuously in her daughter, I recognized the frigid race from which my mother had originated, as promptly as a mineralogist recognizes Swedish iron. Her language was that of the old Court, she pronounced the *oit* as *ait* and said *frait* for *froid*, *porteux* instead of *porteurs*. I was neither fawning nor stiff: I behaved so well, that on the way to vespers the countess whispered:

"You are perfect!"

The count came to me, took my hand and said: "We are not angry, Félix? If I showed some has-

tiness, you must forgive your old friend. We shall probably stay here to dinner, and we invite you for Thursday, the day before the duchess leaves. I am going to Tours to wind up some business matters. Do not neglect Clochegourde. My mother-in-law is an acquaintance whom I advise you to cultivate. Her salon will lead the fashion in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. She has the traditions of good breeding, she possesses vast information, knows the coat-of-arms of the oldest as well as the latest nobleman in Europe."

The count's good taste, perchance the counsel of his domestic genius, was apparent in the novel circumstances in which he was placed by the triumph of his cause. He showed neither arrogance nor offensive civility, he was unaffected, and the duchess put on no patronizing airs. Monsieur and Madame de Chessel gratefully accepted the invitation to dinner on the following Thursday. The duchess was pleased with me, and her looks told me that she was examining me as a man of whom her daughter had spoken. When we came back from vespers, she questioned me about my family, and asked me whether the Vandenesse already in diplomacy was my relation.

"He is my brother," I said.

Then she became almost affectionate. She informed me that my great-aunt, the old Marquise de Listomère, was a Grandlieu. Her manner was as polite as had been that of Monsieur de Mortsauf the day he first saw me. Her glance lost that haughty expression by which the princes of the earth make

you appreciate the distance between themselves and you. I knew scarcely anything about my family. The duchess told me that my great-uncle, an old abbé whom I did not even know by name, was one of the privy council; my brother had been promoted; finally, by some article in the charter of which I was yet ignorant, my father again became the Marquis de Vandenesse.

"I am only one thing, the slave of Clochegourde," I said in a low voice to the countess.

The enchanter's wand of the Restoration was being brought in play with a rapidity that stupefied children reared under the Imperial government. This revolution was nothing to me. The least word, the simplest gesture of Madame de Mortsauf were the only incidents to which I attached any importance. I did not know what the privy council was; I knew nothing about politics or public affairs; I had no other ambition than to love Henriette better than Petrarch loved Laura. This indifference caused the duchess to take me for a child. A great many people came to Frapesle, thirty of us sat down to dinner. What intoxication for a young man, to find that the woman he loves is the most beautiful among all others, the object of impassioned looks, and to know himself to be the only one to receive the light of her modestly guarded eyes; to be sufficiently familiar with all the gradations of her voice to detect in her speech, apparently light or mocking, the proofs of an unswerving thought, even when one's heart is full of a devouring jealousy of the diversions of society. The

count, delighted at the attentions of which he found himself the centre, became almost young; his wife hoped this might bring some change of mood; and I, I laughed with Madeleine, who, like those children in whom the body perishes beneath the pressure of the mind, was amusing me with astonishing remarks full of a spirit of harmless mockery, but in which nobody was spared. It was a happy day. One word, a hope born that morning had made all nature luminous; and, seeing me so glad, Henriette was glad.

"This happiness in her gray and clouded life seemed very good to her," she told me the next day.

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The following day I naturally spent at Clochegourde ; I had been banished for five days, I thirsted for my life. The count had been gone since six to have his deeds of purchase drawn up at Tours. A grave subject of discord had arisen between the mother and the daughter. The duchess wished the countess to follow her to Paris, when she would secure her a position at Court, where the count, by retracting his refusal, could hold high offices. Henriette, who was supposed to be a happy wife, did not want to reveal her terrible sufferings to anybody, not even to a mother's heart, nor to betray her husband's incompetence. In order to prevent her mother from discovering the secret of her home, she had sent Monsieur de Mortsauf to Tours, where he was to struggle with the notaries. I alone, as she had said, knew the secrets of Clochegourde. After having tested how much the pure air and the blue sky of this valley soothed mental worries or the bitter pangs of sickness, and what an influence living at Clochegourde had upon the health of her children, she pleaded natural objections which were disputed by the duchess, an aggressive woman, who felt less

angered than humiliated by her daughter's bad marriage. Henriette saw that her mother cared little about Jacques and Madeleine, an awful discovery! Like all mothers who are accustomed to continue the same despotism over the married woman that they exercised over the girl, the duchess proceeded with considerations that admitted of no reply; she assumed first an insidious kindness so as to extort assent to her views, then a bitter coolness so as to obtain through fear what she could not secure by gentleness; then, seeing the uselessness of her attempts, she exerted the same spirit of irony that I had observed in my mother. In ten days, Henriette knew all the pangs that young wives incur in the revolts necessary for the establishment of their independence. You who, happily, have the best of mothers, could not understand these things. In order to form any idea of this struggle between a hard, cold, calculating, ambitious woman, and her daughter, full of that sweet, moving kindness which is inexhaustible, you must picture the lily, to which my mind has ever compared her, ground between the wheels of a polished steel machine. This mother had never had anything in common with her daughter: she could not guess at any of the real difficulties which compelled her to forego the advantages of the Restoration, and to continue her solitary life. She thought there was some flirtation between her daughter and myself. This word, which she employed in expressing her suspicions, opened a gulf between the two women which nothing could

henceforth fill. Although families carefully bury these intolerable differences, do you penetrate into them; in almost all you will find deep, incurable wounds which diminish the natural affections; or there are real, pathetic passions rendered eternal by the similarity of character which give a mortal shock, the dark bruises of which are indelible; or latent hatreds which slowly freeze the heart and dry the tears on the day of eternal farewell. Tormented yesterday, tormented to-day, wounded by all, even by her two suffering darlings who were party neither to the ills they endured nor those they caused, how much would not this poor soul have loved him who did not wound at all and who longed to surround her with a triple hedge of thorns, so as to defend her from storms, from all contact, from every hurt? If I suffered from these altercations, I was sometimes happy at feeling that she was throwing herself back into my heart, for Henriette confided her new troubles to me. I could then appreciate her calmness in sorrow, and the strong patience she was able to show. Each day, I better understood the meaning of these words: "Love me as my aunt loved me."

"Then have you no ambition?" said the duchess to me severely, during dinner.

"Madame," I replied, looking at her gravely, "I feel that I have strength to conquer the whole world; but I am only twenty-one, and I am all alone."

She looked at her daughter in surprise, she thought that, in order to keep me with her, her daughter

was quenching the ambition in me. The visit of the Duchesse de Lenoncourt at Clochegourde was a time of perpetual restraint. The countess recommended propriety, and was frightened at a gently spoken word; and, in order to please her, it was necessary to don the armor of dissimulation. The great Thursday came, it was a day of tiresome formality, one of those days abhorred by lovers who are used to the cajoleries of the daily unconstraint, accustomed to see their chair in its place and the mistress of the house wholly their own. Love dreads all that is not itself. The duchess left to enjoy the pomps of the Court, and all was quiet again at Clochegourde.

My little disagreement with the count had had the result of implanting me there even more surely than in the past; I could go there at any moment without arousing the least suspicion, my past life inclined me to expand like a creeping plant in that noble mind where for me the magic world of requited feelings was unfolding. Every hour, from moment to moment, our fraternal marriage, founded upon confidence, became more coherent; we were both settling down into our positions; the countess enfolded me in fostering care, in the white draperies of a wholly maternal love; whilst my love, seraphic in her presence, became, when away from her as keen and scorching as a red-hot iron; I loved her with a double love which alternately darted the thousand arrows of desire and lost them in the sky where they died away in impenetrable ether. If you ask

me why I, young and full of ardent longings, continued in the delusive expectations of platonic affection, I will confess to you that I was not yet man enough to molest this woman, always in dread of some calamity with her children; always expecting an outburst, or stormy variation of mood from her husband; wounded by him, when she was not being worried by the illness of Jacques or Madeleine; seated at the bedside of one of them when her husband, being pacified, allowed her to take a little rest. The sound of too intense a word agitated her very being, a desire shocked her; for her, it had to be veiled love, strength mingled with tenderness, in fact all that she herself was to others.

Then, I will tell this to you who are so thoroughly womanly, this situation allowed of the delightful languors, the moments of heavenly sweetness and the content that follow tacit sacrifices. Her conscientiousness was contagious, the persistence of her devotion without earthly reward was imposing; this deep, secret piety, which served as a link to her other virtues, acted all around like some spiritual incense. Then I was young! young enough to repress my nature in the kiss which she so rarely allowed me to imprint upon her hand, the back only of which she ever gave me and never the palm, the boundary perhaps where for her began sensual voluptuousness. If ever two souls were more intensely bound up together, never was the body more fearlessly or victoriously subdued. At length, later on, I found out the cause of this complete happiness.

At my age, no selfishness diverted my affection, no ambition thwarted the course of this feeling which, unchained like a torrent, made a deluge of all that it swept along. Yes, later on, we love the sex in a woman; whilst in the first woman loved, we love everything; her children are ours, her house is ours, her interests are our interests, her misery is our own much greater misery; we love her dress and her furniture; we are more vexed upon seeing her wheat laid than upon knowing we have lost our money; we are disposed to grumble at the visitor who disturbs our curiosities on the mantelpiece. This saintly love causes us to live in another, while later on, alas! we draw another life into ourselves, by requiring of the woman that she should enrich our impoverished faculties with her youthful feelings.

I was soon one of the family, and for the first time I met with that infinite indulgence which, to a harassed mind, is what a bath is to a tired body; the whole surface of the mind is then refreshed, the deepest furrows smoothed away. You could not understand this, you are a woman, and the question here is of a happiness that you bestow, without ever receiving the like. Only a man knows the keen gratification of being—in the midst of a strange family—the mistress's favorite, the secret centre of her affection; the dogs no longer bark at you; the servants recognize, as well as do the dogs, the hidden insignia that you bear; the children, with whom nothing is disguised, who know that their

participation will never be diminished, and that you are good to the light of their life, these children possess a spirit of divination; they are playful with you, they exercise those kindly tyrannies which they reserve for adored and adoring beings; they show sensible discretion, and are innocent accomplices; they approach you on tiptoe, smile at you and go away noiselessly. For you, all are attentive, gentle and smiling. True passions seem like beautiful flowers which are all the more pleasing to look upon in proportion as the soil wherein they grow is more unfavorable. But, if I enjoyed the delicious benefits of this naturalization in a family in which I found relations after my own heart, I also felt its drawbacks. Until then, Monsieur de Mortsauf had restrained himself on my account; I had only seen his failings as a whole, I soon felt their application to their full extent, and saw how nobly charitable the countess had been in describing her daily struggles. I then became acquainted with all the angles of this intolerable character; I heard those continual outcries for nothing at all, those lamentations over evils that had no visible existence, that innate discontent which was robbing life of its bloom, and that incessant anxiety to tyrannize which would have led him to devour fresh victims every year. When we went out in the evening, he himself directed the walk; but, no matter where it was, he was always bored by it; upon his return home, he would lay the burden of his lassitude upon others; it was his wife's fault for taking him where she wanted to

go against his will; no longer remembering that he himself had led the way, he would complain at being governed by her in the slightest details of life, at not being able to keep a wish or a thought to himself, at being a nobody in his own house. If his harsh words were met with silent patience, he would be annoyed at feeling there was a limit to his power; he demanded sharply whether religion did not command wives to please their husbands, whether it was decent to slight the father of her children. He always ended by attacking some sensitive chord in his wife; and, when he had made it ring again, he seemed to taste a pleasure peculiar to these domineering ciphers. Sometimes he would affect a gloomy silence, a morbid depression, which would suddenly frighten his wife, who would then show him touching attention. Like those spoiled children who exercise their power heedless of maternal alarm, he allowed himself to be petted like Jacques and Madeleine, of whom he was jealous. In short, in the long run I discovered that, upon the smallest as upon the greatest occasions, the count treated his servants, his children and his wife, as he treated me at backgammon. The day upon which, in all their roots and branches, I comprehended these difficulties which, like creepers, stifled and repressed the movements and respiration of this family, swathing with light but manifold threads the progress of the household, and hindering the increase of prosperity by complicating the most indispensable actions, I felt a wondering horror which rose above my love, and

drove it back into my heart. What was I, my God? The tears that I had drunk produced, as it were, a sublime intoxication within me, and I counted it joy to espouse this woman's sufferings. Time was when I had submitted to the count's tyranny in the same way as a smuggler pays his fines; henceforward, I offered myself voluntarily to the despot's blows, so as to be as close as possible to Henriette. The countess understood me, allowed me to take my place beside her, and rewarded me by giving me permission to share her sorrows, just as once the repentant apostle, anxious to fly to Heaven in company with his brethren, obtained the favor of dying in the Circus.

"But for you, I should have sunk under this existence," said Henriette one evening when the count, like flies on a very hot day, had been more stinging, more sour, more variable than usual.

The count had gone to bed. We remained, Henriette and I, part of the evening under our acacias; the children played around us, bathed in the rays of the setting sun. Our words, few and exclamatory only, revealed to us the mutuality of the thoughts in which we rested from our joint sufferings. When words failed, the silence faithfully ministered to our minds, which, so to speak, entered into one another unhindered, but unbidden by a kiss; both enjoying the delights of a pensive torpor, they entered into the undulations of the same reverie, plunged together into the river, emerging refreshed like two nymphs as completely one as jealousy could desire,

but without any earthly bond. We went into a bottomless gulf, we returned to the surface, empty-handed, asking each other with a look: "Shall we ever have one day to ourselves amidst so many days?" When voluptuousness plucks us these flowers which are born without beginning, why does the flesh murmur? In spite of the enervating poetry of the evening which tinted the bricks of the balustrade an orange color, so soothing and so pure; in spite of this religious atmosphere which conveyed to us in softened strains the cries of the two children and left us quiet, desire wound through my veins like the signal for a bonfire. After three months I was beginning to rebel against the part that had been assigned to me, and I gently stroked Henriette's hand, endeavoring thus to transmit the wealth of voluptuousness which was consuming me. Henriette turned into Madame de Mortsauf again, and withdrew her hand; tears swam in my eyes, she saw them and gave me a cool glance while carrying her hand to my lips.

"You must understand then," she said, "that this costs me tears! It is a dangerous friendship that demands so great a favor."

I burst out, I launched forth into reproaches, I spoke of my sufferings and the little alleviation that I asked in order to endure them. I ventured to tell her that at my age, even if the senses were all soul, the soul too had a sex; that I could die, but not die with sealed lips. She imposed silence upon me by casting me one of her proud looks, in which I seemed to

read the *"And I, am I upon roses?"* of the Cacique. Perhaps indeed I was mistaken. Ever since the day when, before the gate of Frapesle, I had wrongfully ascribed to her that thought wherein our happiness was to spring from a tomb, I had been ashamed of staining her soul by desires stamped with brutal passion. She began to speak, and with honeyed lips, told me that she could not be everything to me, that I ought to know it. I understood, the moment she said these words, that, did I not obey her, I should hollow gulfs between us both. I bowed my head. She continued, saying that she had religious assurance of being allowed to love a brother without offense to God or man; that there was a certain comfort in creating out of this worship an actual image of the divine love which, according to her good Saint-Martin, is the life of the world. If I could not be to her something like her old confessor, less than a lover but more than a brother, we must not see each other any more. She could die bearing to God this overload of intense suffering, endured not without tears or pangs.

"I have given," she said in conclusion, "more than I ought, so as to have nothing left that could be taken, and I am punished for it."

I had to calm her, promise her never to cause her any uneasiness, and to love her at twenty as old men love their youngest child.

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The next day I came early. She had no more flowers for the vases in her gray salon. I rushed out into the fields and vineyards, and looked for flowers to make up two bouquets; but, while picking them one by one, trimming their stalks, and admiring them, I thought that the colors and leaves had a harmony, a poetry which forced itself upon the understanding while charming the eye, just as musical phrases waken a thousand memories in the depth of loving and beloved hearts. If color is organized light, should it not have a meaning just as combinations of air have theirs? Helped by Jacques and Madeleine, all three delighted at conspiring to surprise our darling, I undertook, upon the lower stairs of the steps where we established the headquarters for our flowers, to arrange two bouquets by means of which I tried to depict a sentiment. Imagine a stream of flowers gushing out of two vases, falling down in fringed billows, and from the heart of which leaped my vows in white roses and silver-cupped lilies. Upon this cool surface gleamed the cornflowers, forget-me-nots, adder-wort, all the blue flowers the shades of which, borrowed from the

sky, so well match the white; is it not a twofold innocence, that which knows nothing and that which knows all, the child's thought and the martyr's thought? Love has its heraldry, and the countess secretly deciphered it. She gave me one of those incisive looks which resemble the cry of a sick person touched upon a sore: she was both confused and delighted. What a reward in that look! To make her happy, to refresh her heart, what encouragement! So I invented the theory of Father Castel on behalf of love, and for her rediscovered a science which was lost in Europe where the blossoms of the inkstand take the place of the pages written in the East in perfumed colors. How fascinating to express one's feelings through these daughters of the Sun, sisters of the flowers blown beneath the rays of love! I very soon understood the productions of the field flora, just as a man whom I met later at Grandlieu used to understand bees.

Twice a week, during the remainder of my stay at Frapesle, I repeated the lengthy process of this poetic work, the completion of which required all varieties of grasses, of which I made a thorough study, not so much as a botanist as a poet, studying their spirit rather than their form. In order to find a flower just where it grew, I would often go enormous distances, to the banks of rivers, in the valleys, to the top of rocks, on to open plains, collecting thoughts in the depth of the woods and heaths. On these rambles, I initiated myself into pleasures that are unknown to the scholar who lives

in meditation, to the agriculturist absorbed in specialties, to the mechanic riveted to the towns, to the tradesman fastened to his counter, but known by some foresters, some woodcutters, some dreamers. There are effects in nature, the significances of which are unlimited, and which rise to the level of the greatest moral conceptions. Whether it be a flowery heath, covered with the diamonds of the dew which moistens it, and in which the sun is sporting, an immensity decked out for a single timely glance; or a forest nook encircled with ruined rocks, intersected with gravel, clothed in moss, adorned with junipers, which strikes you by its indescribable wildness, harshness, and awfulness, whence comes the cry of the osprey; or a burning plain, without vegetation, stony, with steep sides, the horizons of which resemble those of the desert, and where I used to find a sublime and solitary flower, a pasque-flower with a violet silk flag displayed for its golden stamens; touching image of my fair idol, alone in her valley! or great pools of water upon which nature immediately spreads green spots, a species of transition between plant and animal, where in a few days life appears, with plants and insects floating there, like a world in the ether! Or, again a cottage with its garden full of cabbages, its vine, its palings, overhanging a bog, begirt by a few meagre fields of rye, symbol of so many humble lives! Or, finally, a long forest path like some cathedral nave, where the trees are the columns, and the branches form the arches of the roof, at the end of which

a distant glade with touches of light mingled with shadows or varied by the red tints of the setting sun, peeps through the leaves and looks like the colored windows of a choir full of singing birds: then, at the exit of these cool and leafy woods, a chalky land where, upon glowing, sonorous mosses, satiated adders retire into their holes raising their elegant, slender heads. Cast upon these scenes sometimes floods of sunshine streaming down like nutritive waves, sometimes masses of gray clouds ranged like the line in an old man's forehead, sometimes the cold tones of a slightly orange sky, streaked with bands of a pale blue; then listen: you will hear indefinable harmonies in the midst of a silence that bewilders.

During the months of September and October, I never constructed a single bouquet which cost me less than three hours' research, so much was I wondering, with the sweet forgetfulness of the poets, at these fleeting allegories where for me were represented the most contrasting phases of human life, stately pageants into which my memory now goes searching. Often, now-a-days, I join to these grand scenes the recollection of the feeling at that time lavished upon nature. There I once more lead the sovereign whose white dress undulated through the copses, floated over the sward, the thought of whom, like a promised fruit, arose from each calyx full of amorous stamens.

No declaration, no proof of mad passion could have had stronger contagion than these flower symphonies,

in which my deluded desire led me to exert the efforts that Beethoven conveyed in his notes; profound inward searchings, tremendous soarings towards the sky. Madame de Mortsauf was no one but Henriette at sight of them. She would ever return to them, and feast upon them, she would answer all the thoughts I had placed in them when, in order to accept them she raised her head from her tapestry frame, with: "Good Heavens, how beautiful that is!" You will understand this delicious correspondence from a detailed account of a bouquet, as after a fragment of poetry you would understand Saadi. Have you ever smelled in the fields, in the month of May, that perfume which infects all beings with the rapture of impregnation, so that in a boat you dip your hands in the water, you bare your head to the wind, and your thoughts bloom again like the forest tufts? A little herb, the sweet-scented vernal grass, is one of the most powerful agents in this hidden harmony. Indeed no one can keep it near with impunity. Into a bouquet put its leaves, glossy and striped like a dress with white and green threads, and in the depths of your heart inexhaustible exhalations will stir the budding roses which there lie crushed by modesty. Around the bell-shaped neck of the china vase, imagine a large margin entirely composed of the white clusters peculiar to the sedum of the vines in Touraine; vague image of the desired attitude, compliant as that of the submissive slave. From this layer rise the spirals of the white-belled bindweed, the sprays of the pink

rest-harrow, interspersed with a few ferns, and a few young shoots of the oak with magnificently colored, glossy leaves ; all advance prostrated humbly like weeping-willows, timid and suppliant like prayers. Above, see the slender, flowering, ever fluttering fibrils of the purple meadow sweet shedding its almost yellow tips in floods ; the snowy pyramids of the meadow-grass from the fields and streams, the green foliage of the barren brome-grass, the tapering plumes of those bent-grasses called the wind's-eye ; purplish hopes with which the first dreams are crowned and which stand out against the gridelin background where the light beams around its flowering grasses. But higher up still, a few monthly roses here and there amid the light lace-work of the bird's-nest, the feathers of the cotton-grass, the marabout of the meadow-sweet, the umbellule of the wild chervil, the fair hairs of the clematis in fruit, the tiny saltires of the milk-white crosswort, the corymb of the milfoil, the diffuse stems of the fumitory with pink and black flowers, the tendrils of the vine, the winding shoots of the honeysuckle ; in short, all that is most disordered, and most heart-rending in these simple creatures, spearworts and triple pistils, lance-shaped, jagged leaves, stems twisted like the desires entangled in the depths of the soul. From the bosom of this prolix torrent of overflowing love, leaps a magnificent red double poppy accompanied by its bursting acorus, flying the sparks of its conflagration above the starry jasmines and overhanging the incessant shower of the pollen,

a beautiful cloud that glitters in the air while reflecting the light in its thousand shining particles! What woman, intoxicated by the fragrance of Aphrodite hidden in the vernal grass, would not understand this wealth of submissive ideas, this fair tenderness stirred by uncontrolled impulses, and this flaming desire of love which seeks a happiness denied in the struggles so oft renewed with the repressed, indefatigable, eternal passion?

Place this discourse in the light of a window, so as to show the fresh details, the delicate contrasts, the traceries, so that the softened sovereign may see the more full blown flower whence drops a tear; she will be quite ready to surrender, it would need an angel or the voice of her child to keep her back on the brink of the abyss. What does one give to God? perfumes, light and songs, the most purified expressions of our nature. Well then, was not all that is offered to God offered to love in this poem of luminous flowers, ceaselessly singing its melodies in the heart, while fostering the hidden voluptuousness, the unavowed hopes, the fancies that are kindled and extinguished like gossamer on a warm night.

These neutral pleasures were of great assistance to us in cheating nature that was chafing at the prolonged contemplation of the beloved, at that gaze which delights in shining into the very depth of the forms penetrated. To me, I dare not say to her, it was like those fissures through which gushes the water confined in an invincible dam, and which often

prevents a disaster by sharing the necessity. Abstinence entails deadly exhaustion which is staved off by a few crumbs falling one by one from that sky which, from Dan to Sahara, supplies the traveller with manna. And yet, at sight of these bouquets, I have often detected Henriette with drooping arms, lost in those stormy reveries during which the thoughts swell the breast, inflame the brow, come in waves, spout out foam, threaten and leave behind an enervating weariness. Never since have I made up a bouquet for anybody. When we had invented this language for our own use, we felt the same satisfaction as that of the slave who deludes his master.

During the rest of this month, when I hurried up through the gardens, I would sometimes see her face pressed against the window; and, when I came into the salon I would find her at her frame. If I did not arrive at the time agreed upon without our ever having appointed it, her white form would sometimes stroll up and down the terrace; and, when I surprised her there, she would say: "I came to meet you. Must one not be a little coquettish with the youngest child?"

The tiresome games of backgammon between the count and myself had been suspended. His latest purchases necessitated a great many expeditions, examinations, verifications, boundary limitations and surveyings; he was taken up with orders that had to be given, with field labors that required the master's eye and that were settled between his wife

and himself. We often went, the countess and I, to meet him in his new domains with his two children, who, during the walk would run after insects, stag-beetles, mole-crickets, and also make their bouquets, or to be exact, their bundles of flowers. To walk with the woman one loves, to give her one's arm, to pick out the way for her! these unlimited joys suffice for a lifetime. Conversation is then so confidential! We went alone, and returned with the general, a nickname of gentle raillery which we gave the count when he was in a good temper. These two ways of going varied our pleasure by the contrasts, the secret of which is known only by hearts that are obstructed in their union. On the return journey, the same joys, a glance, a clasp of the hand, were intermingled with anxieties.

The conversation, so free during the going, on the return was full of mysterious significations, when one of us, after a short interval, would find an answer to insidious questions, or a discussion begun would be continued under that enigmatical guise to which our language lends itself so well and which women are so ingenious at inventing. Who has not tasted the delight of understanding each other as if in an unknown sphere where spirits separate themselves from the throng and unite together in eluding the common laws?

One day, a wild hope of mine was dissipated, when, to an inquiry on the part of the count who wanted to know what we were talking about, Hen-

riette replied by a sentence with a double meaning with which he was satisfied. This innocent sally amused Madeleine and afterward made her mother blush, and she apprised me by a stern look that she might withdraw her soul from me as she had once withdrawn her hand, as she wished to remain an irreproachable wife. But this purely spiritual union has so many attractions, that the next day we began again.

*

So flew the hours, days and weeks, full of recurring happiness. Then came the time of the vintage, which in Touraine is a real holiday. Toward the end of September, the sun, less hot than during harvest-time, permits of remaining in the fields without fear of sunburn or fatigue. It is easier to gather grapes than to reap the grain. The fruit is all ripe. The harvest is over, bread is cheaper, and this abundance makes life glad. At last the apprehensions inspired by the result of the field labors, where as much money as toil disappears, fade before the replenished barn and the cellars which are waiting to be filled. The vintage is then like the joyous dessert of a gathered-in feast, the sky always smiles upon it in Touraine, where the autumns are magnificent. In this hospitable country, the vintagers are fed in the house. These being the only meals where these poor people, every year, get substantial and well cooked food, they think as much of it as the children in patriarchal households think of birthday festivities. And so they come in crowds to those houses where the masters treat them liberally. The house is then full of people and provisions. The

presses are always open. All seems to be alive with this bustle of coopers, of trucks filled with laughing girls, of people who, earning better wages than during the rest of the year, sing at every turn. Then, another cause for pleasure, all ranks are mingled; women, children, masters and servants, all join in the divine harvesting. These various circumstances may account for the hilarity transmitted from age to age, which is developed in these last fine days of the year, and the recollection of which inspired Rabelais of old with the bacchic form of his great work. Jacques and Madeleine, always ill, had never been at a vintage; I was like them, and they felt I know not what childish delight at seeing their excitement shared; their mother had promised to go with us. We had gone to Villaines, where the baskets of the country are made, to order some very nice ones for ourselves; it then remained for us four to gather several measures which had been reserved for our scissors; but it was agreed that we should not eat too many grapes. To eat the rich *co* of Touraine in the vineyards seemed so delightful a thing, that the finest grapes on the table were disdained. Jacques made me promise to go nowhere else to see the grape gathering and to reserve myself for the enclosure at Clochegourde. Never had these two little creatures, usually ailing and pale, been so fresh and rosy, so active and busy as on this morning. They chattered for the sake of chattering, went to and fro, ran about, and returned without any apparent reason; but, like other children, they

FÉLIX TO MME. DE MORTSAUF

We went in the loveliest weather to the vineyard, and there we stayed half the day. How we contended as to who should find the finest grapes, and who should fill his basket the quickest! There were goings and comings from the vine-plants to the mother, not a grape was gathered that was not shown to her: she laughed the hearty laugh fraught with her youth, when, arriving after her little girl with my basket, I said to her like Madeleine:

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seemed to have too much life to shake off; Monsieur and Madame de Mortsauf had never seen them like this. I became a child again with them, more childish may be than they, for I too was hoping for my harvest. We went in the loveliest weather to the vineyard, and there we stayed half the day. How we contended as to who should find the finest grapes, and who should fill his basket the quickest! There were goings and comings from the vine-plants to the mother, not a grape was gathered that was not shown to her: she laughed the hearty laugh fraught with her youth, when, arriving after her little girl with my basket, I said to her like Madeleine:

"And mine, mother?"

She replied:

"Dear child, do not overheat yourself!"

Then, passing her hand in turn over my neck and hair, she gave me a little tap on the cheek, adding:

"You are in a perspiration!"

It was the only time that I heard this caress of the voice, the familiar *tu* of lovers. I looked at the beautiful hedgerows covered with red fruits, wild plums and blackberries; I listened to the cries of the children, I looked at the troop of vintagers, the cart full of casks, and the men laden with baskets! — Ah! I engraved it all upon my memory, even down to the young almond-tree beneath which she was sitting, fresh, glowing and smiling under her opened umbrella. Then I set to work to pick the grapes, to fill my basket, to go and empty it in the vintage

cask with a laborious application, silent and unflagging, and a slow and measured progress that left my mind free. I tasted the unspeakable pleasure of an outward toil which maintains life by regulating the course of passion, quite ready, but for this mechanical movement, to ignite everything. I knew how much wisdom is contained in uniform labor and I understood the monastic rules.

For the first time in a long while, the count was neither disagreeable nor unkind. To see his son, the future Duc de Lenoncourt-Mortsauf, so healthy, pink and white and smeared with grapes, gladdened his heart. This being the last day of the grape-gathering, the general promised that there should be dancing in the evening in front of Clochegourde in honor of the restored Bourbons; in this way the fête was complete for everybody. Going home, the countess took my arm; she leaned upon me in such a way as to let my heart feel the weight of her own, a movement of the mother wishing to communicate her joy, and whispered to me:

"You bring us happiness!"

Truly, for me who knew her sleepless nights, her anxieties and her previous life in which she had been sustained by the hand of God, but in which all was barren and irksome, these words emphasized by her rich voice unfolded delights which no other woman in the world could ever give me.

"The miserable monotony of my days is broken, life grows fair with hope," she said after a pause. "Oh! do not leave me! do not ever betray my in-

nocent superstitions! be the first born who becomes the savior of his brethren!"

Here, Natalie, nothing is romantic; in order to discover the infinity of deep feelings, one must in one's youth have cast the lead into those great lakes upon the brink of which one has lived. If with many beings, the passions have been as torrents of lava flowing between parched banks, are there not some souls in whom passion, restrained through insuperable difficulties, has filled the crater of the volcano with pure water?

Once more we had a similar fête. Madame de Mortsauf wanted to accustom her children to the realities of life, and acquaint them with the painful labors by which money is gained; and so she had assigned them revenues subject to the chances of agriculture; to Jacques belonged the produce of the walnut-trees, to Madeleine that of the chestnuts.

A few days after that, we had the gathering of the chestnuts and walnuts. To go and beat Madeleine's chestnut trees, to hear the fruit falling as their burrs rebounded upon the dead, dry velvet of the ungrateful soil where the chestnut-tree grows; to see the serious gravity with which the little girl examined the heaps while estimating their value, which for her meant the pleasures that she gave herself unchecked; the congratulations of Manette, the housekeeper who alone helped the countess with her children; the lessons afforded by the sight of the trouble entailed in the collection of the least riches, so often imperilled by the alternations of climate.

made a scene in which the simple joys of childhood stood out charmingly in the midst of the sombre tints of early autumn. Madeleine had her own storehouse, where I wanted to see her dusky treasure put away, while sharing in her delight. Well, to-day I still thrill at the recollection of the noise made by each basketful of chestnuts as they rolled on to the yellowish fibre mixed with earth which did duty as a floor. The count took some for the house; the gatherers, the servants, and everyone round about Clochegourde procured buyers for la Mignonne, the friendly epithet that in the country the peasants willingly bestow even upon strangers, but which seemed to belong exclusively to Madeleine.

Jacques was less fortunate in his walnut crop, it rained for several days; but I consoled him by advising him to keep his nuts so as to sell them a little later. Monsieur de Chessel had told me that the walnut trees yielded nothing in Brehémont, neither in the district of Amboise, nor in that of Vouvray. Walnut oil is greatly used in Touraine. Jacques ought to get at least forty sous from each tree, there were two hundred of them, so the sum was considerable! he wanted to buy himself a riding outfit. His wish started a public discussion in which his father made him some reflections upon the instability of incomes, and upon the necessity of establishing reserves for those years when the trees might be unfruitful, so as to obtain an average income. I knew what the countess was feeling in her silence; she was rejoiced to see Jacques listening to his

father, and the father recovering a little of the sacredness in which he was wanting, thanks to that sublime delusion that she had prepared. Have I not told you, in describing this woman, that earthly language would fail to convey her traits and her genius? When such scenes as this occur, the heart enjoys their delights without analyzing them; but with what force they stand out later on against the obscure background of a fitful life! like diamonds, they gleam set in thoughts full of alloy, regrets blended with the memory of vanished happiness! Why is it that the names of the two newly purchased estates, with which Monsieur and Madame de Mortsauf were so much occupied, La Cassine and La Rhétorière, move me more than the most beautiful names in the Holy Land or Greece? *Whoso loves, declares it!* La Fontaine has said. These names possess the talismanic virtues of the astrological words used in evocations, they teach me the meaning of magic, they waken sleeping figures who immediately arise and speak to me, they take me to that happy valley, they create a sky and scenery; but are not evocations always taking place in the regions of the spiritual world? Do not be astonished then to see me entertaining you with such familiar scenes. The slightest details of this simple and almost common-place life have been like so many apparently slender links, by which I was closely united to the countess.

The children's interests caused Madame de Mortsauf as much worry as did their feeble health. I

very soon recognized the truth of what she had told me relative to her secret rôle in the household affairs, into which I gradually became initiated while learning details about the country that a statesman ought to know.

After a ten years' struggle, the countess had changed the cultivation of her estates; she had *put them out in fours*, an expression which is used in the country to explain the results of the new method according to which the farmers sow wheat but once in four years, in order that the ground may yield produce every year. In order to overcome the obstinacy of the peasants, it had been necessary to cancel leases, divide the estates into four big farms and hold them on half profits, a form of cattle lease peculiar to Touraine and the neighboring country. The owner gives the house, the farm buildings and seeds to willing farmers with whom he divides the expenses of cultivation and the profits. This division is superintended by a *métivier*, a man who is commissioned to take the half due to the proprietor, an expensive system complicated by accounts that vary every moment with the nature of the lots. The countess had made Monsieur de Mortsauf cultivate a fifth farm composed of private grounds situated round Clochegourde, as much to occupy him as to prove to her farmers on half profits, the excellence of the new methods. Being skilled in managing cultivation, she had slowly, and with womanlike persistence, had two of her small farms remodelled on the plan of the farms of Artois and

Flanders. To guess her purpose is easy. After the expiration of the leases on half profits, the countess wanted to make two good farms of her four small ones, and to let them in cash to active, intelligent people, so as to simplify the revenues of Clochegourde. Fearing to die the first, she was trying to leave the count revenues that could be easily collected, and the children possessions that no incapacity could imperil. At the present time, fruit trees that had been planted ten years were in full bearing. The hedges which guaranteed the property from any future contest were grown. The poplars, elms, all had been successful. With the new purchases and by introducing everywhere the new system of cultivation, the estate of Clochegourde, divided into four large farms, two of which were still to be established was capable of bringing in sixteen thousand francs cash, at the rate of four thousand francs for each farm; without counting the vineyard, or the two hundred acres of wood adjoining, or the model farm. The roads from her four farms could all lead into a big avenue which was to go in a straight line from Clochegourde to join the road to Chinon. The distance between this avenue and Tours being only five leagues, she ought not to be short of farmers, particularly at a time when everyone was talking about the amendments made by the count, of their success, and the improvement of his estates. In each of the newly bought properties, she wanted to have invested about fifteen thousand francs so as to turn the masters' houses into two

great farms, in order to let them better after having cultivated them for a year or two while sending there as bailiff one Martineau, the best and most honest of her *métiviers*, who would shortly be out of a place; for the leases on half profits of her four farms were drawing to a close, and the time had come for combining them into two farms and letting them for cash.

Her ideas, which were so simple, but complicated by the laying out of thirty odd thousand francs, were at this period the subject of long discussions between herself and the count; terrible quarrels, in which she was upheld only by the interests of her two children. The thought: "If I were to die to-morrow, what would happen?" gave her palpitations. Gentle, quiet souls with whom anger is impossible, who only wish to see reigning around them their own deep inward peace, alone know much strength is required in these struggles, what full surges of blood rush to the heart before the commencement of the fight, what weariness takes hold of the being when, after having wrestled, nothing is gained. Just as her children were less sickly, less thin, and more active, for the fruit season had had its effects upon them; just as she was following them in their games with moistened eyes, feeling a contentment that renewed her strength by refreshing her heart, the poor woman was suffering the insulting bickerings and stinging attacks of a bitter opposition. The count, alarmed at these changes, denied their advantages and feasibility with dense obstinacy. To

conclusive arguments he would reply with the objection of a child who would call in question the influence of the sun in summer. The countess outweighed him. The victory of common sense over folly eased her wounds, she forgot her injuries. That day she went for a walk to La Cassine and La Rhétorière, in order to decide upon the buildings. The count walked on alone in front, the children divided us, and we were both behind, following slowly, for she was talking to me in that low gentle voice which made her words seem like little waves, murmured by the sea on the fine sand.

She was sure of success, she was telling me. Competition was about to be established in the traffic from Tours to Chinon, undertaken by an active man, a carrier, a cousin of Manette, who wanted to have a large farm on the road. He had a numerous family ; the eldest son was to drive the carriages, the second the wagons ; the father, settled on the road, at La Rabelaye, one of the farms to be let and in a central situation, would be able to superintend the stages and thoroughly cultivate the estates by improving them with the manure yielded by his stables. As to the second farm, La Baude, which was only a step from Clochegourde, one of their four farmers, an honest, intelligent and active man who foresaw the advantages of the new cultivation, had already offered to take it on a lease. As to La Cassine and La Rhétorière, these properties were the best in the country ; once the farmhouses were built and the land in a good state, they would

only need to be advertised in Tours. In this way, in two years Clochegourde would bring in about twenty-four thousand francs a year; La Gravelotte, the farm at Maine which had been recovered by Monsieur de Mortsauf, had just been taken at seven thousand francs for nine years; the pension of a Major-General was about four thousand francs; if this income did not yet constitute a fortune, it procured great comfort; later on, other improvements might perhaps enable her to go one day to Paris to superintend the education of Jacques, in two years, when the health of the heir apparent should be established.

With what trepidation she uttered the word *Paris!* I was at the bottom of this plan, she wished to be apart from the friend as little as possible. At this word, I fired up, and told her that she did not know me; that, without a word to her, I had plotted to complete my education by working night and day so as to become tutor to Jacques; for I should never be able to endure the idea of a young man being in her home.

At these words, she grew serious.

"No, Félix," she said, "this cannot be any more than your priesthood. If, by a single word you have touched the mother to the very bottom of her heart, the woman loves you too sincerely to allow you to become the victim of your attachment. An irretrievable discredit would be the reward for this devotion, and I should not be able to help it. Oh! no, may I never be fatal to you in

anything! You, Vicomte de Vandenesse, a tutor? You! whose noble device is *Sell not thyself!* Were you a Richelieu, life would be for ever barred to you. You would cause your family the very greatest sorrow. My friend, you do not know what impertinence a woman like my mother can put into a patronizing look, what humiliation into a word, what contempt into a nod."

"And if you love me, what is the world to me?"

She pretended not to hear and continued:

"Although my father is kind and disposed to grant me all that I ask, he would never forgive you for having placed yourself badly in society and would refuse to support you. I would not see you tutor to the Dauphin! Accept society as it is, and make no mistakes in life. My friend, this foolish proposition of—"

"Of love," I said in a low voice.

"No, of charity," she said, restraining her tears, "this mad idea enlightens me as to your character; your heart will be your ruin. From this moment, I claim the right to teach you certain things; leave to my woman's eyes the task of sometimes seeing for you. Yes, from the far corner of my Clochegourde, I, silent and glad, want to help in your success. As to a tutor, well, do not worry, we will find a good old abbé, some former Jesuit scholar and my father will willingly sacrifice a certain sum for the education of the child who is to bear his name. Jacques is my pride. And yet he is eleven years old," she said after a pause, "but it is with

him as it was with you; at first sight I thought you were thirteen."

We had arrived at La Cassine, where Jacques, Madeleine and I followed her just as little ones follow their mother; but we were in her way; I left her for a moment and went into the orchard, where Martineau senior, her keeper, together with Martineau junior, the *métivier*, were considering whether the trees should or should not be felled; they were discussing this point as if it were a question of their own possessions. I then saw how much the countess was beloved. I expressed my opinion to a poor day-laborer who, with his foot on his spade and his elbow resting on the handle, was listening to the two doctors in pomology.

"Ah! yes, monsieur," he replied, "she is a good woman and not proud, like all those apes at Azay who would see us die like dogs rather than yield us a sou on six feet of a ditch! The day that woman leaves the country, the holy Virgin will weep, and so shall we. She knows what is her due; but she knows our difficulties, and makes allowances for them.

With what pleasure I gave all my money to this man!

*

A few days afterward there came a pony for Jacques whom his father, an excellent rider, wanted to slowly accustom to the fatigues of horsemanship. The child had a pretty riding suit, bought with the profits from the walnuts. The morning he took his first lesson, accompanied by his father and by the shrieks of the astonished Madeleine who jumped about on the turf around which Jacques was trotting, was, to the countess, the first great fête of her maternity. Jacques wore a tucker embroidered by his mother, a little riding-coat of sky-blue cloth fastened into a belt of varnished leather, white pleated knicker-bockers and a Scotch cap from which his yellow hair fell in great curls ; he was lovely to look upon. The servants belonging to the house also gathered to share in this domestic happiness. The young heir smiled at his mother as he passed and held himself fearlessly. This first manly act on the part of a child over whom death so often seemed to hover, the hope of a great future, guaranteed by this ride in which he looked so fair, so pretty, and so fresh, what a delicious reward ! The joy of the father, who seemed to be growing young once more and was

smiling for the first time in a long while, the delight expressed in the eyes of all the servants, the exclamation of an old De Lenoncourt groom who was on his way home from Tours, and who, seeing the manner in which the child was holding the reins, said:

"Bravo, Monsieur le Vicomte!"

It was too much, and Madame de Mortsauf burst into tears. She, so calm in sorrow, found herself too weak to endure the delight of admiring her child riding over this gravel where she had often wept over him beforehand, while walking him up and down in the sun. At this moment, she leaned upon my arm without compunction, and said:

"I think I have never suffered. Do not leave us to-day."

The lesson over, Jacques threw himself into the arms of his mother, who caught him and pressed him to her with the intensity that comes from excessive delight, and there were kisses and caresses without end. I went with Madeleine to gather two magnificent bouquets so as to decorate the table in honor of the cavalier. When we returned to the salon, the countess said to me:

"The 15th of October will indeed be a great day! Jacques has had his first riding lesson, and I have just made the last stitch in my work."

"Well, Blanche," said the count, laughing, "I want to pay you for it."

He offered her his arm and led her into the front courtyard, where she saw a barouche that her father

was giving her, and for which the count had bought two horses in England, brought over with those of the Duc de Lenoncourt. The old groom had prepared it all in the front yard, during the lesson. We dragged the carriage along while going to see the plan of the avenue which was to lead in a straight line from Clochegourde to the Chinon road, and which the recent acquisitions enabled to be made across the new estates. Coming back, the countess said to me with an air full of melancholy :

" I am too happy ; happiness is like an illness to me, it overcomes me, and I am afraid lest it should fade away like a dream."

I loved her too passionately not to be jealous, and I, I could give her nothing ! In my rage, I was casting about for some means of dying for her. She asked me what were the thoughts that were clouding my eyes, I told them to her naïvely, she was more touched by them than by all the presents, and shed balm into my heart, when, after having led me out upon the steps, she whispered :

" Love me as my aunt loved me, will not that be to give me your life ? and, if I take it in this way, does that not make me your debtor at every moment ? —It was quite time to finish my tapestry," she continued, going back into the salon, where I kissed her hand as if in renewal of my vows, " Perhaps you do not know, Félix, why I set myself this lengthy task ? In the occupations of their life, men find resource in vexations, the excitement of business distracts them ; but, we women, we have no stay in

our minds in our miseries. In order to be able to smile at my children and my husband when I was a prey to sad ideas, I felt the need of regulating the suffering by some physical movement. In this way I avoided the relaxation that follows great expenditure of strength, as well as the flashes of exaltation. The action of lifting the arm at equal intervals lulled my mind and imparted to my soul, wherein the tempest raged, the peace of the ebb and flow by thus regulating its emotions. Each stitch shared the confidence of my secrets, do you see? Well then, in working at my last armchair, I was thinking too much of you! yes, a great deal too much, my friend. What you put into your bouquets, I used to whisper to my patterns."

The dinner was gay. Jacques, like all children who are thought of, flung his arms round my neck at sight of the flowers that I had gathered for him in the shape of a crown. His mother pretended to sulk with me because of this infidelity; you can imagine with what grace the dear child offered her this coveted bouquet! That evening, we all three played backgammon, I alone against Monsieur and Madame de Mortsauf, and the count was charming. Lastly, at nightfall they escorted me as far as the path to Frapesle, on one of those quiet evenings, the harmonies of which add in depth to the feelings what they lose in animation. It was a unique day in this poor woman's life, a brilliant spot that often came to smile upon her memory in hours of trial. Indeed, the riding lessons soon became a

subject of discord. The countess rightly feared the father's harsh reproaches to the son. Jacques was already growing thin, dark rings were encircling his beautiful blue eyes; to spare his mother sorrow, he preferred to suffer in silence. I hit upon a remedy for his ills by advising him to tell his father that he was tired, when the count flew into a rage; but these palliatives were inadequate; the old groom was obliged to take the place of the father, who did not allow his pupil to be wrested from him without wrangling. The outcries and discussions were renewed; the count found themes for his continual plaints in the want of gratitude in women; twenty times a day he taunted his wife about the carriage, horses and liveries. Finally, there occurred one of those incidents which such characters and infirmities love to take hold of: the expenditure exceeded by one half the estimates at La Cassine and La Rhétorière, where the walls and rotten planks collapsed. A workman stupidly came to announce this news to Monsieur de Mortsauf, instead of telling it to the countess. It was the subject of a quarrel begun at first quite mildly, but which gradually became embittered, and in which the count's hypochondria, allayed for several days, demanded its arrears from the poor Henriette.

That day, I had left Frapesle at half-past ten, after breakfast, so as to come and make up a bouquet at Clochegourde with Madeleine. The child had brought me the two vases out on the balustrade of the terrace, and I went into the surrounding gardens,

hunting for the autumn flowers, so beautiful but so rare. Upon returning from my final excursion, I did not see my little lieutenant in the pink sash and scolloped tippet, and I heard shouts coming from Clochegourde.

"The general," said Madeleine in tears—and with her this word was a word of hatred of her father—"the general is scolding our mother, do go and defend her."

I flew up the steps and reached the salon without being noticed or greeted by the count or his wife. At the madman's piercing shrieks I went to shut all the doors, then I returned; I saw that Henriette was as white as her dress.

"Never marry, Félix," said the count, "a woman is counselled by the devil; the most virtuous of them would invent evil where it did not exist, they are all brutes."

Then I listened to arguments with neither beginning nor end. Taking advantage of his former negations, Monsieur de Mortsauf repeated the nonsense of the peasants who objected to the new methods. He declared that, had he managed Clochegourde, he would be twice as rich as he was. While giving violent and abusive expression to his blasphemies, he was swearing, jumping from one article of furniture to another, displacing them and thumping them; then, in the middle of a sentence he would break off to speak of his backbone which was burning, or of his brain which was escaping in torrents, like his money. His wife was ruining him.

Wretched man, of the thirty odd thousand francs income he possessed, she had already brought him more than twenty. The estates of the duke and those of the duchess were worth more than fifty thousand francs a year, in reserve for Jacques. The countess was smiling proudly, and looking to Heaven.

"Yes," he cried, "Blanche, you are my executioner, you are killing me; I know you! you want to get rid of me, you are a monster of hypocrisy. She laughs!—Do you know why she is laughing, Félix?"

I was silent and bent my head.

"This woman," he continued, answering his own question, "severs me from all happiness, she is as much mine as she is yours, and she pretends to be my wife! She bears my name and fulfils none of the duties that divine and human laws impose upon her, so she lies both to men and God. She wears me out with walks and tires me so that I may let her alone; I am not pleasing to her, she hates me, and employs all her cunning so as to remain a girl; she drives me mad by the deprivation she causes me, for then all goes to my poor head; she is killing me by inches and fancies herself a saint, who takes the Sacrament every month!"

The countess was now weeping bitter tears, humiliated by the degradation of this man, to whom for all answer she said:

"Monsieur!— monsieur!— monsieur!—"

Although the count's words made me blush for him as for Henriette, they stirred my heart deeply,

for they were in accordance with the feelings of purity and delicacy which are the fabric, so to speak, of the first passion.

"She is virgin at my expense," said the count. At that word the countess cried:

"Monsieur!"

"What do you mean," he said, "with your imperious *monsieur?* am I not the master? must I then teach you that?"

He advanced to her, protruding his now hideous head like that of a white wolf, for in his yellow eyes was an expression which made him look like a starving beast coming out of a wood. Henriette slid from her chair to the ground to take the blow which did not come; she had fallen at full length upon the floor, unconscious, completely crushed. The count was like a murderer who feels the blood of his victim spirting in his face, he stood quite stupefied. I lifted the poor woman up in my arms, the count let me take her as if he felt himself unfit to carry her; but he went before me to open the door of the room next the salon, the sacred chamber which I had never entered. I placed the countess on her feet, and held her a moment in one arm, passing the other round her waist, while Monsieur de Mortsauf was removing the counterpane, the eiderdown and the bed clothing; then we lifted her and laid her, all dressed, on the bed. Upon recovering consciousness, Henriette begged us by a gesture to undo her waistband; Monsieur de Mortsauf found some scissors and cut everything, I made her inhale some salts, she opened her

eyes. The count went away, more ashamed than sorry. Two hours passed in profound silence. Henriette's hand was in mine, and she pressed it without being able to speak. From time to time, she would raise her eyes to tell me with a look that she wanted to remain undisturbed and quiet; then there was a moment's pause in which she raised herself on her elbow and whispered to me:

"The poor man! if you knew—" She laid her head again upon the pillow. The recollection of her past trouble, added to her present sufferings, sent her into nervous convulsions which I could only calm through the magnetism of love; a power as yet unknown to me, but which I employed instinctively. I held her with tenderly modulated strength; and, during this last fit, she looked at me in such a way as to make me weep. When her nervous attacks ceased, I rearranged her disordered hair, which I touched for the first and only time in my life; then I took her hand again and looked long at the brown and gray room, the simple bed with curtains of chintz, the table covered with a toilet-cloth trimmed in the old-fashioned way, the shabby sofa with the quilted cushion. What poetry in this spot! What neglect of luxury for herself! her luxury was the most exquisite cleanliness. Noble cell of a religious wife full of saintly resignation, in which the only ornament was the bedside crucifix, above which was the portrait of her aunt; then, on each side of the holy water font, pencil drawings of her two children done by herself, and their hair from the time

they were little. What a retreat for a woman whose appearance in the fashionable world would have thrown the fairest into the shade! Such was the boudoir where the daughter of an illustrious house ever mourned, just now overwhelmed with bitterness and denying herself the love which would have consoled her. Secret and irreparable misery! And tears from the victim for the persecutor, and tears from the persecutor for the victim. When the children and the maid came in, I went out. The count was waiting for me, he already acknowledged me as a mediatory power between his wife and himself; and he seized my hands crying:

"Stay! stay, Félix!"

"Unfortunately," I said, "Monsieur de Chessel has company, it would not be advisable that his guests should inquire into the reasons of my absence; but, after dinner I will come back."

He came out with me, and conducted me as far as the lower door without saying a word; then he accompanied me as far as Frapesle without knowing what he was doing. At last, there, I said to him:

"For Heaven's sake, Monsieur le Comte, let her manage your house, if that pleases her, and do not torment her any more."

"I have not long to live," he said in a serious way; "she will not suffer long through me, I feel that my head is bursting."

And he left me in a paroxysm of unwitting egotism.

After dinner, I returned for news of Madame de

Mortsauf, whom I found already better. If such, for her, were the joys of marriage, if similar scenes often recurred, how could she live? What slow unpunished murder! All through that evening, I saw by what unheard of tortures the count unnerved his wife. Before what tribunal was such litigation to be brought? These reflections stupefied me, I could not say a word to Henriette; but I spent the night writing to her. Of the three or four letters that I wrote, there remained this beginning, with which I was not pleased; but, if it seemed to me to express nothing, or to be speaking too much of myself when I should only have been thinking of her, it will show you the state of my mind:

TO MADAME DE MORTSAUF

"How many things did I not have to say to you upon arriving, of which I was thinking on the way and which I forget at sight of you! Yes, the moment I see you, dear Henriette, I no longer find my words in harmony with the reflections of your soul, which augment your beauty; then beside you I experience such infinite happiness, that the actual feeling effaces the feelings of the preceding life. Every time, I rise to a more expansive life and am like the traveller who, in climbing some great rock, discovers at each step a new horizon. At each fresh conversation, do I not add to my vast treasures another treasure? In that, I think, lies the secret of long, inexhaustible attachments. So I can only speak to you of yourself when far away from you. In your

presence, I am too much dazzled to see, too happy to question my happiness, too full of you to be myself, too eloquent through you to be able to speak, too eager to snatch the passing moment to remember the past. You must know this constant intoxication well to be able to forgive me its illusions. Near you, I can do nothing but feel. Nevertheless, I will venture to tell you, dear Henriette, that never, in all the many joys you have inspired, have I felt any happiness approaching the delight that filled my soul yesterday when, after that horrible tempest in which you fought against evil with superhuman courage, you recovered with me alone, in the twilight of your room, into which I was led by that unfortunate scene. I only have known with what light a woman can shine when she comes from the gates of death to the gates of life, and the dawn of regeneration comes to shade her brow. How sweet was your voice! How insignificant words, even yours, seemed to me, when, in the sound of your adored voice the vague remembrance of a past sorrow reappeared, mingled with the divine consolations with which you finally reassured me, while thus giving me your first thoughts. I knew you to excel in all human splendors; but, yesterday, I caught a glimpse of a new Henriette who should be mine, if God so willed. Yesterday, I saw I know not what being released from the bodily fetters which prevent us from rousing the fires of the soul. You were very beautiful in your prostration, very majestic in your weakness! Yesterday, I discovered something

more beautiful than your beauty, something sweeter than your voice, lights more sparkling than is the light of your eyes, perfumes for which there are no words; yesterday, your soul was visible and palpable. Ah! how I suffered in not being able to open my heart to you so that your life should be thereby renewed. In short, yesterday, I gave up the respectful awe with which you inspire me; did not this swoon draw us closer together? Then, I knew what it was to breathe by breathing with you, when the convulsions allowed you to inhale our air. How many prayers uplifted to Heaven at once! If I did not die while traversing the spaces that I cleared in order to ask God to leave you still to me, one does not die either of joy or sorrow. That moment has left memories buried in my soul which will never rise again to its surface without tears coming to my eyes; each happiness will increase the mark, each sorrow will make them deeper. Yes, the fears which agitated my soul yesterday will be a term of comparison for all my future miseries, just as the joys that you have lavished upon me, fond eternal thought of my life! will predominate over all the joys that the hand of God may deign to shed upon me. You have made me understand divine love, that certain love which, complete in its own strength and duration, knows neither suspicion nor jealousy."

A profound melancholy was devouring my soul, the spectacle of this domestic life was distressing to a

heart young and inexperienced in social agitation; to find this abyss upon the threshold of the world, a bottomless gulf, a dead sea. This terrible combination of misfortunes suggested infinite thoughts, and, at my first step in social life, I had an immense measure beside which the other scenes referred to could no longer be anything but trivial. My sadness gave Monsieur and Madame de Chessel the impression that my love was unsuccessful, and I had the good fortune of in no way injuring my noble Henriette by my passion.

The next day, when I went into the salon, she was there alone; she contemplated me a moment as she stretched out her hand, and said:

"So the friend will always be too tender?"

Her eyes moistened, she got up, then said in a tone of desperate entreaty:

"Do not write to me any more like that!"

Monsieur de Mortsauf was kind. The countess had recovered her courage and serene brow; but her color betrayed the sufferings of the day before, which had been calmed without being extinguished. She said to me that evening, as we were walking through the dry autumn leaves which resounded under our footsteps:

"Sorrow is infinite, joy has limits."

This phrase revealed her sufferings, by the comparison she drew between them and her fleeting pleasures.

"Do not slander life," I said, "you know nothing of love, and there are delights that radiate to the skies."

"Hush!" she said, "I do not want to know anything about them. The Greenlander would die in Italy! I am calm and happy beside you, I can tell you all my thoughts; do not destroy my confidence. Why should you not possess the virtue of the priest and the charm of the independent man?"

"You would make one drink the cup of hemlock," I said, putting her hand upon my heart, which was beating in hurried thumps.

"Again!" she cried, drawing back her hand as if she had felt some keen pain. "Then do you want to rob me of the sad pleasure of having the blood of my wounds stanched by a friendly hand? Do not add to my troubles, you do not know them all! The most secret are the most difficult to overcome. If you were a woman, you would understand into what melancholy mingled with disgust a proud person sinks, when she sees herself the object of attentions that do not in any way atone and with which *someone* thinks to atone. For several days, I shall be flattered, *someone* will want to earn pardon for the wrong that *someone* attributes to himself. I might then obtain consent to the most unreasonable whims. I am humbled by this degradation, by these caresses which cease the day *someone* thinks I have forgotten it all. To owe the good graces of one's master to nothing but his faults—"

"To his crimes!" I said sharply.

"Is it not a frightful state of existence?" she said, smiling at me sadly. "Then I do not know how to make use of this transient power. At this

moment, I am like those knights who did not strike their fallen adversary. To see on the ground him whom we should honor, to pick him up only to receive fresh blows, to suffer from his fall more than he himself suffers and to feel it a disgrace if one takes advantage of a temporary influence, even for some useful purpose; to waste one's strength, to consume the treasures of the soul in these ignominious struggles, to prevail only as one receives mortal wounds! Death were better. If I had no children, I should yield myself to the current of this life; but, without my secret courage what would become of them? I must live for them, however painful life may be. You speak to me of love? Eh! my friend, just think of the hell I should fall into if I gave this pitiless being—all weak people are so—the right to despise me? I could not endure a suspicion! The purity of my conduct is my strength. Virtue, dear child, has holy waters into which one dips and from which one emerges renewed in the love of God!"

"Listen, dear Henriette, I have only one week more to stay here, I wish that—"

"Ah! you leave us?" she said, interrupting me.

"But ought I not to find out what my father has decided upon for me? It will soon be three months—"

"I have not counted the days," she replied with the abandon of a woman deeply moved. She collected herself and said:

"Come, let us go to Frapesle."

She called the count and the children and asked for her shawl; then, when all was ready, she, so deliberate, so calm, was seized with the energy of a Parisienne, and we set off in a troop for Frapesle to pay a visit that the countess did not owe. She exerted herself to talk to Madame de Chessel, who, fortunately, was very diffuse in her answers. The count and Monsieur de Chessel conversed about their affairs. I was afraid lest Monsieur de Mortsauf should boast about his carriage and horses, but he behaved in perfect taste. His neighbor questioned him about the works that he was undertaking at La Cassine and La Rhétorière.

Upon hearing the inquiry, I looked at the count, thinking that he would refrain from a subject of conversation so fatal in memories, so cruelly bitter for him, but he showed how urgent it was to improve the state of agriculture in the district, to build fine farms in pure and wholesome quarters; in short, he gloriously assumed his wife's ideas. I looked at the countess, ashamed. This lack of delicacy in a man who upon certain occasions could show so much, this forgetfulness of the dreadful scene, this adoption of ideas against which he had so violently set himself, this belief in self, petrified me.

When Monsieur de Chessel said to him:

"Do you think you will be able to recover your outlay?"

"Over and above!" he said with an affirmative gesture.

Such fits were only to be explained by the word

insanity. Henriette, the divine creature, was radiant. Did not the count seem to be a man of sense, a good manager, an excellent agronomist? She stroked Jacques's hair in rapture, glad for herself, glad for her son! What a horrible comedy, what a satirical drama! I was horrified. Later on, when the curtain of the social stage lifted for me, how many Mortsaufs did I not see, minus the flashes of loyalty, minus the religion of this one! What strange, sarcastic power is that which perpetually awards to the madman an angel, to the sincere, poetic lover a bad woman, to the little the great, and to this ape this beautiful, sublime creature; to the noble Juana the Captain Diard, whose history you knew at Bordeaux; to Madame de Beauséant a d'Ajuda, to Madame d'Aiglemont her husband, to the Marquis d'Espard his wife? I have sought long for the meaning of this enigma, I confess. I have unearthed many secrets, I have discovered the reason of several natural laws, the meaning of some divine hieroglyphics; about this I know nothing, I study it always like a figure of the Indian tomahawk, the symbolic construction of which the Brahmins have kept to themselves. Here, the spirit of evil is too obviously master, and I dare not accuse God. Irremediable misfortunes, who is it that takes pleasure in weaving you? Could Henriette and her Mysterious Philosopher then be right? can their mysticism contain the general meaning of humanity?

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The last days that I spent in this part of the country were those of leafless autumn, days darkened by clouds that sometimes hid the Touraine sky, always so clear and glowing at this beautiful season. On the eve of my departure, Madame de Mortsauf led me out on the terrace, before dinner.

"My dear Félix," she said, after a silent turn under the dismantled trees, "you are going into the world, and I would like to accompany you there in thought. Those who have suffered much have lived much; do not fancy that lonely souls know nothing of this world; they judge it. If I am to live through my friend, I do not want to be uneasy either in his heart or in his conscience; in the thick of battle, it is very difficult to remember all the rules, allow me to give you a few lessons, as a mother to a son. The day you leave, I will give you, dear child, a long letter in which you will find my woman's ideas about the world, about men, and about the way to meet the difficulties in this great tumult of interests; promise me not to read it until you get to Paris? My petition is the utterance of one of those freaks of feeling which are our secret, belonging to us

women; I do not think it is impossible to understand it, but perhaps we should be sorry to have it understood; leave me those little ways in which a woman loves to wander alone."

"I promise," I said, kissing her hands.

"Ah!" she said, "I have one other promise to ask of you; but pledge yourself beforehand to agree to it."

"Oh! yes," I said, thinking it was going to be a question of fidelity.

"It is not about me," she continued, smiling bitterly, "Félix, never gamble, no matter in what salon it may be; I do not except that of anybody."

"I will never gamble," I replied.

"Good!" she said, "I have hit upon a better use for the time you might waste in play; you will see that where others are bound to lose sooner or later, you will always win."

"How?"

"The letter will tell you," she replied, with a playful air that divested her admonitions of the serious character with which those of the heads of the family are attended.

The countess talked to me for about an hour and proved to me the depth of her affection by revealing to me how carefully she had been studying me during these last three months; she penetrated into the furthermost recesses of my heart, by trying to adapt her own to it; her accent was varied, convincing, her words fell from maternal lips, and showed, as much in tone as in substance, how many links bound us to each other.

"If you knew," she said in conclusion, "with what anxiety I shall follow you on your way, with what joy if you go right, and what tears if you come into contact with corners! Believe me, my affection is unrivalled; it is both involuntary and deliberate. Ah! I should like to see you happy, powerful, respected, you who will be like a living dream to me."

She made me weep. She was at once gentle and awful; her feeling was too openly shown, it was too pure to admit of the least hope for the youth who was athirst for gratification. In return for my flesh left shredded in her heart, she shed upon me the unceasing and incorruptible gleams of that divine love which satisfies only the soul. She rose to heights where the wings checkered by the love that had led me to gloat upon her shoulders, could not bear me; in order to reach her, a man must have won the white wings of the seraphim.

"In all things," I told her, "I should think: 'what would my Henriette say?'"

"Good, I want to be the star and the sanctuary," she said, alluding to the dreams of my childhood and thinking to proffer me the realization of them so as to divert my desires.

"You shall be my religion and my light, you shall be all!" I cried.

"No," she replied, "I cannot be the source of your pleasures."

She sighed and gave me the smile of secret sorrow, the smile of the momentarily rebellious slave. From that day, she was not the well-beloved, but

the best-beloved; she was not in my heart like a woman who expects a place, who becomes engraved there through devotion or excess of pleasure; no, she had the whole heart, and was something necessary to the play of the muscles; she became what Beatrice was to the Florentine poet, the spotless Laura to the Venetian poet, the mother of great thoughts, the secret spring of saving resolutions, the staff of the future, the light that shines in the darkness as the lily in the sombre leaves. Yes, she prompted those lofty determinations which sever the burning hand, and restore the endangered property; she gave me that Coligny-like perseverance to conquer the conquerors, to revive after defeat, to tire out the strongest fighters.

The next day, after having breakfasted at Frapesle and said good-bye to my hosts who had been so lenient to the selfishness of my love, I went to Clochegourde. Monsieur and Madame de Mortsauf had planned to escort me as far as Tours, which place I was to leave at night for Paris. During the journey, the countess was affectionately silent: at first she declared she had the migraine; then she was ashamed of this fib and suddenly palliated it by saying that she could not see me leave without regret. The count invited me to come to his house, whenever, in the absence of the De Chessels, I should feel inclined to revisit the valley of the Indre.

We parted heroically, without any apparent tears; but, like some sickly children, Jacques had an impulse of sensitiveness which made him shed a few

tears, whilst Madeleine, already a woman, squeezed her mother's hand.

"Dear little one!" said the countess, kissing Jacques passionately.

When I found myself alone in Tours, I was taken after dinner with one of those unaccountable manias which one experiences in early years only. I hired a horse and in an hour and a quarter had cleared the distance between Tours and Pont-de-Ruan. There, ashamed of exhibiting my folly, I hastened along the road on foot, and arrived like a spy, stealthily, beneath the terrace. The countess was not there, I fancied she was suffering; I had kept the key of the little door, I went in; at that moment she came down the steps with her two children, slow and sad, to inhale the gentle melancholy stamped upon this landscape at sunset.

"Mother, there is Félix!" said Madeleine.

"Yes, I," I whispered, "I asked myself why I was in Tours, when it was yet easy to see you. Why not carry out a desire which, in a week, I shall no longer be able to realize?"

"He is not leaving us, mother!" cried Jacques, dancing round and round.

"Be quiet, do," said Madeleine, "you will bring the general."

"This is not wise," murmured Henriette, "what folly!"

This consonance expressed in tearful tones, what a payment for what one might term the usurious calculations of Love!

"I had forgotten to give you back this key," I said, smiling.

"But you will not return?" she said.

"Do we ever leave each other?" I asked, giving her a look which made her cast down her lids so as to veil her mute response.

I left after a few moments spent in one of those blissful stupors known to souls that have reached the point at which exaltation finishes and mad ecstasy begins. I went away slowly, turning round at every moment. When, at the top of the plateau, I beheld the valley for the last time, I was struck by the contrast it presented to what it had been when I came; was it not then as green and glowing as my desires and hopes? Initiated now into the gloomy and mournful secrets of a family, sharing the agonies of a Christian Niobe, sad like her, with a clouded soul, I found the valley at this moment in keeping with my ideas. Now, the fields were bare, the leaves of the poplars were falling, and those that remained wore the color of rust; the vine-branches were burnt, the crests of the woods exhibited the grave tints of that tan-color that kings formerly adopted for their dress and which hid the purple of power beneath the brown of the shagreen. Ever in harmony with my thoughts, the valley, where the yellow rays of a mild sun were fading, once more called up a living image of my soul. To leave a beloved woman is either dreadful or a matter of course, according to disposition; I suddenly felt as if I were in a foreign land, the language of which I knew not; I knew not what to

cling to while looking at things to which I no longer felt my soul to be attached. Then, the extent of my love unfolded itself, and my dear Henriette arose in all her greatness in this desert in which I existed but by her memory. She was a figure so religiously adored, that I resolved to stand without stain in the presence of my secret divinity, and ideally reclothed myself in the white robe of the Levites, thus imitating Petrarch, who never presented himself before Laura de Noves but dressed entirely in white. How impatiently I looked forward to the night, when, having returned to my father's house, I should be able to read this letter which I kept touching during the journey just as a miser feels a sum in banknotes which he is obliged to carry about him. During the night, I kissed the paper upon which Henriette had set forth her wishes, where I should recover the mysterious exhalations flowing from her hand, whence the accentuations of her voice should penetrate into my concentrated understanding. I have never read her letters but as I read the first, in bed and amid absolute silence; I do not know how one can otherwise read the letters written by a beloved one; and yet, there are men unworthy of being loved who mingle the reading of these letters with the preoccupations of the day, leaving it and resuming it with odious tranquillity. Here, Natalie, is the lovely voice that suddenly echoed in the silence of the night, here is the sublime figure which reared itself to point out to me the right way in the cross-roads at which I had arrived:

"What pleasure, my friend, to have to collect the scattered elements of my experience so as to transmit it to you and so arm you against the dangers of the world through which you should thread your way skilfully! I have felt the delight lawful to maternal affection, in busying myself about you for several nights. While I was writing this, sentence by sentence, transporting myself beforehand into the life that you are to lead, I went now and again to my window. Beholding from there the moon-lit towers of Frapesle, often I said to myself: 'He is asleep, and I watch over him!' Delightful sensations, which reminded me of the early joys of my life, when I used to contemplate Jacques asleep in his cradle, waiting for him to waken to give him my milk. Are you not a man-child whose soul needs recruiting with a few precepts with which you have not been able to sustain yourself in those terrible colleges where you suffered so much, but which we women have the privilege of affording you? These trifles influence your successes, they pave the way for them and consolidate them. Would it not be a spiritual maternity, this generation of a system to which a man should ascribe the actions of his life, a maternity thoroughly understood by the child? Dear Félix, let me, even if I should here commit a few errors, imprint upon our friendship the disinterestedness which shall sanctify it: does not surrendering you to the world mean giving you up? but I love you enough to sacrifice my enjoyment to your great future. For now nearly four months, you have made

me reflect not a little about the laws and customs which govern our epoch. The conversations that I had with my aunt, and the purport of which concerns you, you who fill her place! the events of his life that Monsieur de Mortsauf had related to me; the words of my father, to whom the court was so familiar; the most important as well as the most trifling incidents, all has welled up within my memory for the benefit of my adopted child whom I see about to rush into the midst of men, almost alone; about to go unwarned into a land where many perish through careless use of their good qualities, and some succeed through the good use of their bad qualities.

"Above all, think over the concise expression of my opinion upon society considered as a whole, for, with you, very few words suffice. I do not know whether communities are of divine origin or whether they are man's invention. I am likewise ignorant of the direction in which they move; what seems to me certain is their existence; from the moment you accept them, instead of living apart, you must consider the constitutive conditions as valid; to-morrow will be signed, as it were, a contract between you and them. Now-a-days is not a man rather made use of by society than profited by it? I think so; but whether a man there finds more burdens than privileges, or whether he pays too dearly for the advantages that he reaps, are questions for the legislator and not for the individual. And so, in my opinion, you should obey the universal law in all

things, without disputing it, whether it injures or favors your interests. However simple this principle may seem to you, it is difficult in its application; it is like sap that has to percolate into the tiniest capillary tubes in order to revive the tree, to preserve its verdure, to develop its blossoms and improve its fruit so magnificently, that it excites universal admiration. Dear, laws are not all written in a book, customs too create laws, the most important being the least known; there are neither professors, nor treatises, nor colleges for that law which regulates your actions, your conversation, your external life, your way of introducing yourself into society or of attacking fortune. To transgress these secret laws is to remain at the bottom of the social status instead of dominating it. Even should this letter express but frequent amplifications of your own ideas, just let me confide to you my feminine policy.

"To explain society by the theory of individual success adroitly gained at the expense of everybody else is a fatal doctrine, the strict inferences of which lead man to believe that everything that he secretly takes to himself, without the law, the world or the individual discovering any wrong, is rightly and duly acquired. According to this policy, the clever thief is absolved, the woman who fails in her duty unknown to anyone, is happy and good; kill a man so that justice should not have a single proof, and if you thus conquer some crown *à la* Macbeth, you have done well; your interest becomes the supreme

law, the point consists in circumventing without witnesses or proofs, the difficulties that customs and laws place between you and your gratifications. To anyone looking thus upon society, the problem constituted by the making of a fortune, my friend, resolves itself into playing a game, the stakes of which are a million or the galleys, a political position or disgrace. Moreover there is not enough cloth in the green baize for all players, and it needs a great deal of genius to contrive a throw. I am not speaking to you either of religious beliefs or sentiments; here it is a question of the wheels of a gold and iron machine, and its direct results with which mankind is concerned. Dear child of my heart, if you share my horror of this criminal theory, then society will only be explained in your eyes as it is explained in all sound judgment, by the theory of duty. Yes, you owe yourselves to each other in a thousand diverse ways. In my opinion, the duke and the peer owe themselves far more to the artisan or the pauper than the pauper and the artisan owe themselves to the duke and the peer. The obligations contracted augment in proportion to the benefits society presents to man, according to this principle, true in business as in politics, that the weight of cares is everywhere in proportion to the extent of the advantages. Each pays his debt in his way. When our poor man of La Rhétorière comes to bed tired with his work, do you think he has not fulfilled his duties? he has assuredly accomplished his better than many people in high places. In thus weighing the society

in which you would desire a place in keeping with your intelligence and faculties, you must lay down, as an actuating principle, this maxim: to indulge in nothing that is against one's own conscience or against the public conscience. Although my insistence may seem to you superfluous, I beg you, yes, your Henriette begs you to well weigh the sense of these few words. Apparently simple, they mean, dear, that uprightness, honor, loyalty and politeness are the surest and quickest instruments of your success. In this selfish world, a great many people will tell you that one does not make one's way by sentiment, that over deference to moral considerations delays one's progress; you will see men, badly brought up, ill-bred or incapable of gauging the future, offending a child, becoming guilty of rudeness to an old woman, declining to bore themselves for a moment with some good old man, under the pretext that they are in no way useful to them; later on, you will see those men entangled in thorns that they will not have blunted, and missing success for a trifle; whilst the man who is trained early in this theory of duties will never encounter obstacles; he may attain it less rapidly, but his prosperity will be solid and remain when that of others crumbles away!

"When I tell you that the application of this doctrine requires, above all else, the science of manners, you may perhaps think that my jurisprudence tastes a little of the court and of the instructions I received in the De Lenoncourt household. Oh, my friend! I at-

tach the very greatest importance to this attainment, so apparently insignificant. The customs of good society are as necessary to you as can be the extensive and varied knowledge you possess; they have often supplemented it: some, in reality ignorant, but gifted with natural intelligence, and accustomed to infusing some coherency into their ideas, have attained a grandeur that eluded the grasp of persons more worthy. I have studied you closely, Félix, in order to find out whether your education, gotten in common in the colleges, had in any way spoiled you. God alone knows with what joy I recognized that you could acquire the little that was lacking! With many persons brought up in these traditions, manners are purely external; for exquisite politeness, a good style, come from the heart and from a deep feeling of personal dignity, that is why, in spite of their education, some nobles are ill-bred, while certain persons of bourgeois extraction are naturally well-bred and only need to take a few lessons in order, without awkward imitation, to acquire excellent manners. Trust the word of a poor woman who will never leave her valley, this noble tone, and gracious simplicity with which speech, gesture, bearing and even the home is stamped constitutes, as it were, a physical poetry of irresistible charm; judge of its power when it takes its rise in the heart! Politeness, dear child, consists in appearing to forget one's self for others; with many people, it is a social grimace which belies itself the moment over-thwarted self-interest peeps out, then a great man becomes ignoble.

But, and I want you to be like this, Félix, true politeness implies a Christian mind; it is like the flower of charity, and consists in really forgetting one's self. In memory of Henriette, do not be a waterless spring, but show intelligence and style! Do not fear that you will often be the dupe of this social virtue, sooner or later you will gather the fruit of so many seeds apparently thrown to the wind. My father used to say that one of the most offensive fashions in ill-judged politeness is the abuse of promises. If something that you cannot do is asked of you, refuse frankly, giving no sort of false hope; then grant promptly that which you wish to grant: in this way you will acquire the grace of refusal and the grace of kindness, a double integrity which wonderfully enhances a character. I do not know whether one is not more hated for a disappointed expectation than thanked for a favor. And above all, my friend, for these little things are well within my province, and I may insist upon what I believe I know, do not be either confiding, commonplace, or impulsive, three stumbling-blocks! Too great confidence diminishes respect, the commonplace procures us contempt, and zeal makes us excellent subjects for imposition. And in the first place, dear child, you will not have more than two or three friends in the course of your existence, your entire confidence belongs to them; would it not be betraying them to give it to several? If you mix more intimately with some men than with others, then be discreet about yourself, always be as reserved as if

you might one day have them for competitors, adversaries or enemies; the chances of life require it to be so. So maintain an attitude which shall be neither indifferent nor enthusiastic, contrive to strike that middle path wherein a man may continue without compromising anything. Yes, believe me, the man of honor is as far from the cowardly complaisance of Philinte as the harsh virtue of Alceste. The spirit of the comic poet gleams in the indication of the just medium as discerned by the noble spectators; indeed, all would incline rather toward the ridiculousness of virtue than toward the supreme contempt hidden beneath the good nature of egotism; but they will know how to keep from both.

"As to the commonplace, if for it you are pronounced by some fools to be charming, people who are accustomed to sounding and appraising human capacity will infer your defect and you will be promptly discredited, for the commonplace is the refuge of feeble persons; now, those who are weak are unfortunately despised by a society that looks upon each one of its members as an organ; perhaps after all they are right, nature condemns imperfect beings to death. And so perhaps the touching protections on the part of the woman are engendered through the pleasure she finds in struggling against blind force, in making the intelligence of the heart triumph over the brutality of matter. But society, more of a stepmother than a mother, adores the children who flatter its vanity. As to zeal, that

first and sublime error of youth which finds real enjoyment in exercising its powers and thus begins by being its own victim before being that of others, keep it for your requited sentiments, keep it for the wife and for God. Do not bring into the world's bazaar or the speculation of politics those treasures in exchange for which you will be given glass trinkets. You must trust the voice which commands nobility in all things, at a time when it begs you not to be uselessly lavish of yourself; for, unhappily, men esteem you in proportion to your utility, without taking your worth into account. To employ an image which shall impress itself upon your poetic mind, be the cipher of inordinate size, traced in gold, or written in pencil, it will never be anything but a cipher. As a man of the present day has said: "Never evince zeal!" Zeal comes very near gullibility, and causes disappointments; you will never find above you any fervor equal to your own; kings, like women, believe that everything is their due. However sad this principle may be, it is true, but never rob your soul of its flowers. Set your pure sentiments on inaccessible heights where their blossoms may be ardently admired, and where the artist will dream almost affectionately of his masterpiece. Duties, my friend, are not sentiments. To do what one ought is not to do what one pleases. A man should go calmly to die for his country, and may joyfully give his life to a woman. One of the most important rules of the science of manners is an almost absolute silence about yourself. Amuse

yourself some day, by talking of yourself to mere acquaintances; entertain them with your sufferings, your pleasures or your affairs; you will see indifference following on pretended interest; then, if the mistress of the house does not politely interrupt you, each one, bored, will move off with skilfully devised excuses. But should you wish to gather all their sympathies, and pass for an amiable, sensible man, to be relied on; talk to them about themselves, find means of bringing them forward, even by raising questions apparently irreconcilable with the individuals; faces will become animated, lips will smile upon you, and when you are gone, everyone will praise you. Your conscience and the heart's voice will tell you the limit at which the cowardice of flattery begins, and the grace of conversation ends.

"Yet another word about talking in public. My friend, youth is always prone to I know not what hastiness of judgment which is to its credit, but which is harmful to it; hence the silence formerly imposed in the education of young people who used to go through a course with the seniors, during which they studied life; for, formerly Nobility, like Art, had its apprentices and its pages devoted to the masters who nurtured them. Now-a-days, youth possesses a hothouse and, therefore, acid knowledge, which disposes it to be severe in judging actions, thoughts and writings; it cuts with the edge of a hitherto untried blade. Do not have this bad habit. Your decisions would be censures which

would wound many persons around you, and all would perhaps be less inclined to forgive a secret injury than any offence you might give publicly. Young people are merciless, because they know nothing of life or its troubles. The old critic is kind and gentle, the young critic is implacable; the latter knows nothing, the former everything. Moreover, at the bottom of all human actions is a labyrinth of determinative motives, the definitive judgment of which God has reserved to Himself. Be severe only to yourself. Your fortune is before you, but nobody in this world can make his fortune unaided; so frequent my father's house, your entry is secured, the intimacies you will there form will be of use to you on a thousand occasions; but do not yield an inch of ground to my mother, she crushes him who gives way, and admires the pride of him who resists her; she is like iron, which, beaten, may be joined to iron, but which by its contact, destroys all that has not its own hardness. So cultivate my mother; if she wishes you well, she will introduce you into the salons, where you will acquire that fatal science of the world, the art of listening, speaking, replying, presenting yourself and leaving; the exact language, an indescribable something which is not superiority just as dress is not genius, but without which the greatest talent will never be admitted. I know you well enough to be sure that I am in no way deluding myself in seeing you beforehand as I wish you to be; simple in manner, gentle in tone, proud with-

out conceit, respectful with old people, attentive without servility, and above all, discreet.

"Display your wit, but do not serve as an amusement to others; for be well assured that, if your superiority ruffles a man of mediocrity, he will hold his tongue and then say of you: "He is very funny!" a term of contempt. Let your superiority always be leonine. Moreover, do not try to please men. In your relations with them, I advise a coolness which may even border on an impertinence which they cannot resent; everyone respects him who disdains them, and this disdain will win you the favor of all the women, who will esteem you in proportion to the small heed you take of men. Never allow disreputable people near you, even if they should not deserve their reputation, for the world demands an account both of our friendships and aversions; in this respect, let your judgments be long and seriously weighed, but let them be irrevocable. When the men repelled by you shall have justified your repulsion, your esteem will be sought after; and thus you will inspire that tacit respect which magnifies a man amongst men. And now you are armed with the youth that pleases, the grace that fascinates, and the wisdom that guards conquests. All that I have just said to you may be summed up in an old saying: *Noblesse oblige!*

"Now, apply these precepts to the policy of business. You will hear many persons saying that shrewdness is the essence of success, that the way to cut through the crowd is to separate men so as to

have way made for one. My friend, these principles were all very well in the Middle Ages, when princes had rival forces with which to destroy one another; but, now-a-days, all is open, and this system will render you very poor service. Indeed, you will meet with, say a loyal, sincere man, or a treacherous enemy, a man who makes use of calumny, backbiting, and fraud. Well, be sure you have no more powerful auxiliary than this, this man is his own enemy; you can fight him with legitimate weapons, sooner or later he will be despised. As to the first, your frankness will win you his esteem; and your interests gained—for all adjusts itself—he will assist you. Do not be afraid of making enemies, woe to him who has none in the world which you are entering; but try to give no handle either to ridicule or discredit; I say try, because, in Paris, a man is not always his own master, and is open to unfortunate circumstances; you can avoid neither the mud in the gutter nor the tile that falls. Morality has its gutters from which dishonored people try to splash the most exalted persons with the mud in which they are sunken. But you can always make yourself respected by proving yourself, in all spheres, to be implacable in your final determinations. In this conflict of ambitions, amid these perplexing difficulties, always go straight to the truth, drive resolutely to the point, and never fight except upon one condition, with all your might. You know how Monsieur de Mortsauf hated Napoléon, he pursued him with curses, he watched over him like justice

over a criminal, every night he asked him for the Duc d'Enghien, the only misfortune, the only death which made him shed tears; well, he admired him as the boldest of captains, he has often explained to me his tactics. This strategy might therefore be applied in the war of interests; it would economize time, as the other economized men and space; think this over, for a woman often makes mistakes in things that we judge by instinct and feeling. I may dwell upon one point; all cunning, all deceit is discovered and ends in destruction, whilst every situation seems to me less dangerous when a man takes his place on the ground of sincerity. If I might quote my own instance, I would tell you that at Clochegourde, forced by Monsieur de Mortsauf's character to prevent all litigation, to immediately arbitrate all disputes which to him would be like an illness in which he would delight while being worsted, I myself have always put an end to it all by going straight to the difficulty and saying to the adversary: 'Let us arrange it, or finish it!'

"You may often chance to be of use to others, to do them some service, and you will be but scantily rewarded; but do not imitate those who complain of men and boast that they have never met any who are not ungrateful. Is not that setting one's self upon a pedestal? then is it not a little foolish to confess one's want of knowledge of the world? And would you do good as a usurer lends his money? Would you not do it for the sake of good itself? *Noblesse oblige!* Nevertheless, do not render such

services, that you compel people to ingratitude, for those will become your most irreconcilable enemies; there is the despair of obligation, like the despair of ruin, which lends incalculable strength. As to yourself, accept as little as you can from others. Do not be the vassal of any one, hold nothing but of yourself. I am only giving you advice, my friend, about the little things of life. In the political world, all points of view are changed, the rules which govern your person yield to greater interests. But, if you should attain the sphere in which great men stir, you will, like God, be the sole judge of your resolutions. You will then be no longer a man, you will be the living law; you will be no more an individual, you will have embodied the nation. But, if you judge, you will also be judged. Later on, you will appear in the presence of centuries, and you know enough of history, to have appreciated the feelings and actions which beget true greatness.

"I come now to a serious question, your conduct toward women. In the salons where you go, keep to the principle of not making yourself cheap by indulging in the petty intrigues of coquetry. One of the men, who, in another age, had the greatest success, was in the habit of never paying attention to but one person in an evening, and of attaching himself to those who appeared to be neglected. That man, dear child, has dominated his period. He had wisely calculated that, in a given time, everybody would persist in praising him. Most young men lose

their most valuable chance, the time necessary for creating acquaintances, which are half of social life; as they please in themselves, they have but little to do to gain interest; but this springtime is fleeting, learn to make good use of it. Therefore cultivate influential women. The women of influence are the old women; they will teach you the connections, the secrets of all families, and the short-cuts which will lead you quickly to the goal. They will gladly help you; patronage is their last love, when they are not devotees; they will be of wonderful use to you, they will extol you and make you desirable. Avoid the young women! Do not imagine that there is the least personal motive in what I say. The woman of fifty will do everything for you, the woman of twenty nothing; this one will demand your whole life, the other but a moment, an attention. Laugh at the young women, take them all as a joke, they are incapable of a serious thought. The young women, my friend, are selfish, petty, without genuine kindness, they love only themselves, they would sacrifice you to a success. Besides, they all want devotion, and your situation requires that some should be shown to you, two irreconcilable claims. Not one of them will understand your interests, all will think of themselves and not of you, all will rather ruin you through their vanity than be of use to you through their attachment; they will devour your time without scruple, will cause your success to fail, and will destroy you with the best grace in the world. If you complain, the silliest among them

will prove to you that her glove is worth all the world, that nothing can be more glorious than to wait upon her. They will all tell you that they bring good luck and will make you forget your great career; their fortune is changeable, your greatness is certain. You do not know with what perfidious art they set about satisfying their caprices, so as to convert a passing liking into a love which begins upon earth and ought to continue in Heaven. The day they leave you, they will tell you that the words *I no longer love you* justify desertion—just as the word *I love* excused their love,—and that love is involuntary. An absurd doctrine, dear one! Believe me, true love is eternal, infinite, always alike; it is even and pure, without violent demonstrations; it is to be seen with white hair, still young in heart. None of these things are to be found among worldly women, they all dissemble. This one will interest you in her misfortunes, she will appear the gentlest and least exacting of women; but, when she has rendered herself necessary, she will slowly domineer over you and will make you do her will; would you like to be a diplomatist, go and come, study men, interests, and countries? No, you must stay either in Paris or at her estate, she will slyly tack you to her skirts; and the more devotion you show the more ungrateful she will be. The other one will attempt to interest you by her compliance, she will become your page, she will follow you romantically to the ends of the earth, she will compromise herself to keep you and will be a stone round your neck. You will one

day be wrecked and the woman will survive. The least subtle of women has innumerable snares; the most imbecile triumphs because of the little suspicion she excites; the least dangerous would be a courtesan who would love you without knowing why, who would leave you without reason, and recapture you through vanity. But they will all ruin you now or in the future. Every young woman who goes into the world, who lives upon pleasure and vain gratifications, is a half corrupt woman who will corrupt you. Of such is not the modest, quiet woman in whose heart you will always reign. Ah! she will be solitary, the woman who is to love you: her greatest feasts will be your looks, she will live upon your words. Then let this woman be the whole world to you, for you will be everything to her: love her well, give her neither sorrows nor rivals, do not excite her jealousy. To be loved, dear, to be understood, is the very greatest happiness, I hope that you may taste it, but do not imperil the flower of your soul, be very sure of the heart in which you place your affections. This woman will never be herself, she should never think of herself, but of you; she will deny you nothing, she will never attend to her own interests and will know how to scent danger for you where you see none, where she will forget herself; finally, if she suffer, she will suffer without complaint, she will have no sort of personal coquetry, but she will, as it were, respect that which you love in her. Return this love by surpassing it. If you are fortunate enough to meet with what will always

be lacking to your poor friend, a love that is equally inspired, equally felt, remember, whatever the perfection of this love, that in a valley there will exist for you a mother whose heart is so deepened by the feeling with which you have filled it, that you never could find the bottom. Yes, I bear you an affection the extent of which you will never know; for it to show itself as it is, you would have to lose that great intelligence, and then you would never know how far my devotion could go. Am I suspicious in telling you to avoid the young women, all more or less artificial, scornful, vain, frivolous, extravagant; to attach yourself to the influential women, those imposing dowagers, full of sense, as was my aunt, who will serve you so well, who will defend you against secret accusations by destroying them, who will say of you what you could never say yourself? After all, am I not generous in ordering you to reserve your adoration for the pure-hearted angel? If this saying: *Noblesse oblige,* includes a great part of my first recommendations, my advice upon your relations with women is also in this motto of chivalry: *Serve them all, and love but one.*

"Your knowledge is vast; your heart, preserved by suffering, has remained without stain; all is beautiful, all is good in you, then be *determined!* Your future now lies in that single word, the word of great men. Will you not, dear child, obey your Henriette, and let her continue to tell you what she thinks of you and your relations with the world? In my soul I have an eye which sees the future for

you as for my children, then let me use this faculty for your advantage, this mysterious gift which has made the peace of my life and which, far from decaying, maintains itself in solitude and silence. In return I ask you to give me a great happiness : I want to see you growing among men, without a single one of your successes bringing a wrinkle to my brow ; I want you to speedily place your fortune on a level with your name, and to be able to tell me that I have helped your greatness in a better way than through desire. This secret co-operation is the only pleasure I can permit myself. I will wait. I do not say good-bye. We are apart, you cannot hold my hand to your lips, but you must surely have seen what place you occupy in the heart of

"Your HENRIETTE."

When I had finished this letter, I felt a maternal heart palpitating beneath my hand at a moment when I was yet chilled by my mother's stern welcome. I guessed why the countess had forbidden my reading this letter in Touraine, no doubt she was afraid to see me falling at her feet and to feel them wet with my tears.

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At last I made the acquaintance of my brother Charles, who until then had been like a stranger to me ; but in his slightest relations there was a haughtiness which placed too great a distance between us for us to love each other as brothers ; all tender feelings depend upon equanimity, and between us there was not a single point of cohesion. He informed me authoritatively of those trifles which the intelligence or the heart divines ; at every turn, he seemed to mistrust me ; had I not had my love as a support, he would have made me awkward and stupid by pretending to believe that I knew nothing. Nevertheless, he introduced me into society, where my simplicity was to set off his accomplishments. But for the miseries of my childhood, I should have mistaken his vanity as a patron for brotherly affection ; but moral solitude produces the same effects as earthly solitude ; the silence enables one to determine the slightest sounds, and the habit of taking refuge in one's self develops a sensitiveness, the delicacy of which reveals the least distinctions in the affections which concern us. Before having known Madame de Mortsauf a hard look would wound me,

the sound of a sharp word would strike me to the heart; I grieved about it, but without knowing anything of the character of endearments; whereas upon my return from Clochegourde I could draw comparisons which brought my premature science to perfection. The observation which rests upon the experience of suffering is incomplete. Happiness too has its enlightenment. I allowed myself all the more willingly to be crushed beneath the right of seniority, because I was not Charles's dupe.

I went alone to visit the Duchesse de Lenoncourt, where I heard no mention of Henriette, where nobody, except the good old duke, who was simplicity itself, spoke of her to me; but, from the manner in which he received me, I divined his daughter's secret recommendations. Just as I was beginning to lose the foolish astonishment that every dèbutant feels at sight of the fashionable world, just as I was catching a glimpse of the pleasures while understanding the resources it offers to ambition, and as I was amusing myself by putting Henriette's maxims into practice while admiring their profound truth, the events of March 20th befell. My brother followed the court to Ghent; as for me, by advice of the countess, with whom I was holding a correspondence, active on my side alone, I accompanied thither the Duc de Lenoncourt. The usual kindliness of the duke grew into sincere interest when he saw me devoted, heart, head and foot, to the Bourbons; he himself presented me to his Majesty. The courtiers of misfortune are few in number; youth has naïve admirations, and

unselfish allegiances; the king knew how to judge men; so what would not have been noticed at the Tuileries was much remarked at Ghent, and I had the good fortune to please Louis XVIII. A letter from Madame de Mortsauf to her father, brought with despatches by an emissary of the Vendeans and in which there was a word for me, informed me that Jacques was ill. Monsieur de Mortsauf, as much in despair at his son's ill-health as at seeing a second emigration begun without him, had added a few words which led me to conjecture the situation of the beloved. No doubt tormented by him when she spent all her time at Jacques's bedside, without rest by day or night; superior to worries, but unable to overcome them when she was devoting her whole mind to nursing her child, Henriette must be longing for the help of an affection which had made her life less burdensome, were it only employed in amusing Monsieur de Mortsauf. Several times already, I had taken the count out-of-doors when he threatened to worry her; an innocent stratagem, the success of which had won me some of those looks that express a passionate gratitude in which love sees promises. Although I was impatient to follow in Charles's footsteps, he had recently been sent to the Congress of Vienna, although I was longing, at the risk of my life, to justify Henriette's predictions and to rid myself of the fraternal vassalage, my ambition, my desires for independence, the advantage it was to me not to leave the king, all paled before the painful figure of Madame de Mortsauf; I resolved to leave the Court

of Ghent to go and serve the real sovereign. God rewarded me. The emissary sent by the Vendeans could not return to France, and the king wanted a man who would devote himself to carrying his instructions there. The Duc de Lenoncourt knew that the king would never forget him who should undertake this perilous enterprise: he made me consent without consulting me, and I accepted, very delighted at being able to return to Clochegourde while at the same time serving the good cause.

After having had at twenty-one years old, an audience of the king, I returned to France, where, whether in Paris, or in Vendée, I was fortunate enough to carry out his Majesty's purposes. Towards the end of May, pursued by the Bonapartist authorities, to whom I had been described, I was forced to fly as a man who seemed to be returning to his home, going on foot from province to province, from forest to forest, across the upper Vendée, Le Bocage and Poitou, altering my route according to emergency. I reached Saumur, from Saumur I went to Chinon, and from Chinon in a single night, I got to the forest of Nueil, where I met the count on horseback on a moor; he helped me up behind, and took me home without our having seen anybody who could recognize me.

"Jacques is better!" was his first remark.

I confessed to him my position as a diplomatic foot soldier tracked like a wild beast, and the nobleman summoned up all his royalism so as to dispute with Monsieur de Chessel the danger of receiving

me. At sight of Clochegourde, it seemed to me that the eight months which had just elapsed had been a dream. When the count said to his wife as he preceded me:

"Guess whom I am bringing?—Félix."

"Is it possible?" she asked, her arms dropping and her face expressive of stupefication.

I showed myself, we both remained motionless, she nailed to her armchair, I to the threshold of her door, gazing at each other with the eager fixity of two lovers who try to make up for lost time with a single look; but, ashamed of a surprise which unveiled her heart, she got up, and I drew near.

"I have prayed much for you," she said, after having stretched out her hand for me to kiss.

She asked me for news of her father; then she guessed my fatigue, and went to busy herself about my bed, whilst the count ordered me something to eat, for I was dying of hunger. My room was the one over hers, that of her aunt; she made the count conduct me to it, after having put her foot on the first step, no doubt deliberating with herself whether she should accompany me; I turned round, she blushed, wished me a good sleep and hastily retired. When I came down for dinner, I was told of the disasters of Waterloo, Napoléon's flight, the march of the allies upon Paris and the probable return of the Bourbons. These events were everything to the count, to us they were nothing. Do you know what was the greatest news,

after the children had been petted? for I do not speak to you of my alarm at seeing the countess so pale and thin; I knew the harm that might be done by a gesture of astonishment, and expressed nothing but pleasure at seeing her. The great news for us was: "You will have some ice!" She had often been vexed the year before at not having cool enough water for me, who, drinking nothing else, liked it iced. God knows at the cost of what importunities she had had a refrigerator constructed! You know better than anybody that love is satisfied with a word, a look, an inflexion of the voice, an apparently slight attention; its greatest privilege is to prove itself by itself. Well, her words, her look, her pleasure betrayed to me the extent of her feelings, just as I used formerly to tell her all mine by my behavior at backgammon. But the naïve evidences of her tenderness abounded; the seventh day after my arrival, she became blooming again; she sparkled with health, joy, and youth; I again found my dear lily more beautiful, more expanded, just as I found my heart's treasures increased. Is it not with only small minds, or with trivial hearts that absence lessens the feelings, effaces the lineaments of the soul, and diminishes the beauties of the loved one? Upon ardent imaginations, upon those beings in whose blood enthusiasm runs, a fresh purple color, and in whom passion takes the shape of constancy, does not absence have the same effect as the tortures which used to strengthen the faiths of the early Christians and enabled them to see God? In a heart

full of love, are there not incessant longings which impart greater value to the desired forms by causing them to appear tinged by the ardor of fancy? Does one not experience an irritation which communicates the beauty of the ideal to the adored features by inscribing them with thoughts? The past, revived memory by memory, becomes magnified; the future is stored with hope. Between two hearts surcharged with these electric clouds, a first interview then becomes a beneficial storm which refreshes the earth and fertilizes it by striking it with the sudden flashes of lightning. What sweet pleasure did I not enjoy in seeing that with us these thoughts and feelings were mutual? With what a delighted eye I followed the progress of happiness in Henriette! A woman who revives under the gaze of the beloved gives perhaps a greater proof of feeling than the one who dies, killed by a doubt, or withered on her stem for want of sap; I do not know which of the two is the more pathetic. The revival of Madame de Mortsauf was natural, like the effects of the month of May upon the fields, like those of the sun and the rain upon the drooping flowers. Like our valley of love, Henriette had had her winter, and was coming to life again as it did in the spring. Before dinner we went down to our dear terrace. There, whilst stroking the head of her poor child, grown more feeble than I had ever seen him, walking beside his mother as silent as if brooding over some fresh illness, she told me about the nights spent at the sick child's bedside.—During those three months, she had,

she said, subsisted upon an entirely inward life; she had inhabited, as it were, a gloomy palace fearing to enter the sumptuous apartments where the lights were shining and where feasts, forbidden to her, were being given, and outside which she stood, one eye on her child, the other on a dim figure, one ear for pain, the other listening for a voice. She used to repeat poems suggested by solitude, poems such as no poet has ever invented; but all this innocently, without being aware of the least vestige of love, or trace of voluptuous thought, or poetry of Eastern suavity, like a rose of Frangistan. When the count rejoined us, she continued in the same strain, like a self-confident woman, who can look proudly at her husband and kiss her son's forehead without a blush. She had prayed a great deal she said, and had held Jacques up during whole nights on her clasped hands, unwilling that he should die.

"I went," she said, "to the very gates of the sanctuary to beg his life of God."

She had had visions; she was relating them to me; but, just as she was pronouncing these wonderful words in her angel voice:

"When I was asleep, my heart was watching!" the count, interrupting her, replied:

"That is to say you were almost crazy."

She held her peace, suffering intense pain, as if it were the first wound inflicted, as if she had forgotten that, for thirteen years, this man had never failed to pierce her heart. Like a sublime bird ar-

rested in its flight by a coarse leaden ball, she sank into dull dejection.

"What! monsieur," she said after a pause, "are none of my words ever to find mercy at the tribunal of your wit? Will you never show any indulgence for my weakness, or comprehension of my feminine ideas?"

She checked herself. This angel was already repenting of her complaints, and at a glance measuring her past as her future: could she be understood? would she not be calling forth a virulent outburst? Her blue veins were throbbing violently in her temples, she shed no tears, but the green of her eye became dim; then she bent her gaze upon the ground so as not to read in mine her same pain magnified, her feelings divined, her soul caressed by my soul, and above all, the infuriated sympathy of a youthful love ready, like a faithful dog, to devour the person who hurts his mistress, without debating either the strength or character of the assailant. At these trying moments, you should have seen the air of superiority assumed by the count; he thought he was triumphing over his wife, and would then overwhelm her with a shower of words in which the one idea was repeated over and over again, and which were like the strokes of an axe giving out the same sound.

"Then he is always the same?" I said when the count had unavoidably left us, called away by his groom who came to look for him.

"Always!" replied Jacques.

"Always excellent, my son," she said to Jacques, thus trying to screen Monsieur de Mortsauf from the judgment of his children. "You see only the present, you know nothing of the past, and you could not possibly criticize your father without doing him some injustice; but, should you have the sorrow of seeing your father in the wrong, the honor of the family requires that you should bury such secrets in the most profound silence."

"How are the alterations at La Cassine and La Rhétorière getting on?" I asked, so as to draw her away from her bitter thoughts.

"Far beyond my hopes," she said. "The houses finished, we found two excellent farmers, one of whom took the house at four thousand five hundred francs, taxes paid, and the other the one at five thousand francs; and the leases are signed for fifteen years. We have already planted three thousand feet of trees on the two new farms. Manette's kinsman is delighted at having La Rabelaye. Martineau holds La Baude. The property of our four farmers consists of the meadows and woods, from which they do not, like some unscrupulous farmers, take away the manure destined for our ploughlands. And so *our* efforts have been crowned by the very greatest success. Clochegourde, without the reserves which we call the home-farm, without the woods and vineyards, brings in nineteen thousand francs, and the plantations have paved the way for some good annuities. I am fighting hard to get our reserved ground given to Martineau, our keeper,

who can now be replaced by his son. He offers three thousand francs for it if Monsieur de Mortsauf will build him a farm at La Commanderie. Then we could clear the outskirts of Clochegourde, finish our projected avenue as far as the Chinon road, and have nothing but our vineyards and forests to look after. If the king returns, *our* pension will be recovered; *we* shall consent to it after a few days' cruise against *our* wife's common sense. Jacques' fortune will then be indestructible. Once these final results are obtained, I shall let Monsieur de Mortsauf save up for Madeleine, whom the king will endow besides, according to custom. My conscience is at rest; my task is being fulfilled— And you?" she said.

I explained my mission, and showed her how wise and profitable her advice had been. Was she gifted with second-sight to be thus able to foresee events?

"Did I not write you as much?" she said. "For you alone I can exert an astonishing faculty, of which I have spoken to none but Monsieur de la Berge, my confessor, and which he attributes to divine intervention. Often, after some deep musings, induced by the anxieties about the condition of my children, my eyes became closed to things of the earth and saw into another region; whenever I saw Jacques and Madeleine luminous, for a certain time they would be in good health; if I saw them there enwrapped in mist, they soon fell ill. As for you, not only do I always see you shining, but I hear a soft voice which tells me, without words, by

some mental communication, what you ought to do. By what law am I only able to use this marvellous gift for my children and for you?" she said, lapsing into reverie, "Is it that God wishes to act as their father?" she said wondering, after a pause.

"Let me believe," I said, "that I obey none but you!"

She gave me one of those perfectly sweet smiles that caused me such tremendous intoxication of heart, that I should not then have felt a mortal blow.

"As soon as the king is in Paris, go there, and leave Clochegourde," she continued, "if it is degrading to beg for offices and favors, it is also foolish not to be within reach to accept them. There will be some great changes. The king will need capable, trustworthy men, do not fail him; you will be initiated young into affairs and you will be all the better for it; for, with statesmen as with actors, there are technical things that genius does not reveal, they must be learned. My father in this takes after the Duc de Choiseul. Think of me," she said after a pause, "let me taste the pleasures of supremacy in a soul entirely my own. Are you not my son?"

"Your son?" I rejoined, pouting.

"Nothing but my son," she said, laughing at me, "is not that possessing a large enough place in my heart?"

The bell rang for dinner, she took my arm, and leaned upon it complacently.

"You have grown," she said, as we were going up the stairs.

When we were at the top, she shook my arm as if my glances affected her too keenly ; although her eyes were cast down, she knew very well that I looked at nothing but her ; so she said to me with that air of pretended impatience, so graceful and so pretty :

"Come now, do look a little at our beloved valley!"

She turned round, lifted her white silk parasol over our heads, holding Jacques close to her ; and the movement of the head with which she showed me the Indre, the ferry-boat and the meadows, proved that, since my visit and our walks, she had come to an understanding with these filmy horizons, with their misty windings. Nature was the cloak beneath which her thoughts were sheltered. She now knew the meaning of what the nightingale sighs in the nights, and what the songster of the marshes says while chanting his plaintive note.

At eight o'clock that evening, I witnessed a scene which moved me deeply, one that I had never been able to see, as I had always remained to play with Monsieur de Mortsauf whilst she went into the dining-room before the children's bedtime. The bell rang twice, all the servants of the house assembled.

"You are our guest, you must obey the rule of the convent!" she said, dragging me along by the hand with that air of innocent fun which distinguishes the really pious woman.

The count followed us. Master, children, servants, all knelt down, bareheaded, taking their usual

places. It was Madeleine's turn to say the prayers; the dear little thing said them in her childish voice, the guileless tones of which stood out clearly in the harmonious silence of the country and lent to the phrases the holy purity of innocence, that gift of angels. It was the most touching prayer I have ever heard. Nature answered the child's words by the thousand rustlings of evening, like the accompaniment of an organ lightly touched. Madeleine was on the right of the countess and Jacques on the left. This graceful cluster of the two heads with the mother's plaited tresses rising between and the snowy hair and yellow skull of Monsieur de Mortsauf crowning all, composed a picture the colors of which in some sort reflected in the mind the ideas awakened by the melodies of the prayer; lastly, in order to comply with the conditions of that unity which marks the sublime, this devout assembly was enwrapped in the subdued light of the setting sun, the red tints of which were coloring the room, thus permitting the souls, either poetic or superstitious, to fancy that the fires of heaven were visiting these faithful servants of God kneeling there without distinction of rank, in the equality commanded by the Church. By carrying me back to the days of patriarchal life, my thoughts still further magnified this scene, already so grand in its simplicity. The children said good-night to their father, the servants saluted us, the countess went off, giving a hand to each child, and I returned to the salon with the count.

"We work out your salvation there, and make

your hell here," he said, pointing to the backgammon board.

Half-an-hour afterwards the countess rejoined us and brought her frame close to the table.

"This is for you," she said, unrolling the canvas, "but, for three months, the work has been very slack. Between that red carnation and this rose, my poor child suffered."

"Come, come," said Monsieur de Mortsauf, "do not let us talk about that any more. Six-five, *monsieur l'envoyé du roi*."

When I went to bed, I concentrated my thoughts so as to listen to her going and coming in her room. If she was calm and pure, I was wrought up by wild ideas inspired by intolerable longings.

"Why should she not be mine?" I said to myself. "Perhaps she too is plunged in this whirling excitement of the senses?"

At one o'clock, I went downstairs, I was able to walk without making a sound, I reached her door, and there laid myself down; my ear applied to the crack, I could hear her breathing as evenly and gently as a child. When overcome by cold, I went back again, got into bed and slept quietly until morning. I do not know to what predestination, what nature, must be attributed the pleasure that I take in approaching the edge of precipices, sounding the depths of evil, examining the bottom of it, feeling the chill, and drawing back alarmed.

That hour of the night passed on the threshold of her door, when I wept for rage, without her ever

knowing that the next day she had trodden upon my tears and my kisses, upon her virtue alternately destroyed and respected, cursed and adored; that hour, foolish in the eyes of some, is a suggestion of that my sterious feeling which prompts soldiers, for some of them have told me that they had thus staked their lives, to rush in front of a battery to see whether they would escape the shot, and if they were fortunate in thus crossing the abyss of chance, they fumed about it like Jean Bart on a cask of powder.

The next day, I went to gather and arrange two bouquets; the count admired them, he who never was roused by anything of this kind, and for whom the remark of Champcenetz: "He builds prisons in Spain," would seem to have been said.

I spent several days at Clochegourde, only going to pay short visits at Frapesle, where nevertheless I dined three times. The French army had just occupied Tours. Although I was evidently the life and health of Madame de Mortsauf, she besought me to go to Châteauroux, and to return in all haste to Paris, through Issoudun and Orleans. I tried to resist, she commanded, saying that the familiar spirit had spoken; I obeyed. This time our farewells were drenched with tears, as she feared for me the seductions of the world in which I was to live. Was it not necessary to enter seriously into the whirlwind of interests, passions and pleasures which makes Paris as dangerous a sea to pure affection as to the innocence of conscience? I promised to write

her every night the events and thoughts of the day, even the most frivolous. At this promise, she leaned her drooping head upon my shoulder and said:

"Do not forget anything, it all interests me."

She gave me letters for the duke and duchess, to whose house I went the second day after my arrival.

"You are in luck," said the duke, "dine here, and come with me to-night to the palace, your fortune is made. The king mentioned you this morning, saying: 'He is young, capable and faithful.' And the king regretted not knowing whether you were dead or alive, or to what spot events had driven you, after having so well fulfilled your mission."

That night, I was made referendary* to the Council of State, and I was given a secret post at the Court of the King, Louis XVIII., of the same permanence as that of his reign, a place of trust, without brilliant favors, but removed from the chances of disfavor, which threw me into the heart of the government and was the source of my prosperity. Madame de Mortsauf had advised rightly, and so I owed everything to her: power, riches, success and knowledge; she guided and encouraged me, purified my heart and imparted that unity to my will without which the forces of youth are expended in vain.

Later on, I had a colleague. Each of us was on duty for six months. We could take each other's

* An officer in France whose duty consists in reporting petitions to the Council of State.

place if necessary; we had a room in the palace, our carriageand, large remunerations for our expenses when we were obliged to travel.

Strange position! To be the secret disciples of a monarch to whose policy his enemies have since rendered open justice, to listen to him, deciding everything, domestic and foreign, to be without any evident influence, and to find one's self sometimes consulted as was Laforêt by Molière, to feel the indecisions of a long experience confirmed by the conscience of youth. Our future, also, was established in such a way as to satisfy ambition. Besides my salary as referendary, paid by the budget of the Council of State, the king allowed me a thousand francs a month out of his privy-purse, and himself often gave me presents. Although the king foresaw that a young man of twenty-three could not long endure the work with which he overwhelmed me, my colleague, now a peer of France, was not chosen until about the month of August, 1817. This selection was so difficult, our duties required so many qualifications, that the king was a long time coming to a decision. He did me the honor to ask me with which one of the young men among whom he was hesitating I should agree the best. Amongst them happened to be one of my schoolfellows of the pension Lepître, and I did not mention him at all; His Majesty asked me why.

"The King," I said, "has chosen men of equal fidelity but of different capacity; I have named the one whom I believe to be the most able, feeling sure

of always living on good terms with him." My judgment coincided with that of the king, who was always grateful to me for the sacrifice that I had made on this occasion. He said to me :

"You shall be Monsieur le Premier."

He did not forget to tell this incident to my colleague who, in return for this service, gave me his friendship.

The consideration so conspicuously shown me by the Duc de Lenoncourt regulated that with which I was surrounded by society. These words : "The king takes deep interest in that young man ; that young man has a future, the king likes him," would have supplied the place of talent, but to the gracious welcome of which young people are the object, they communicated an indescribable something that is accorded to power. Were I at the house of the Duc de Lenoncourt, or at that of my sister, who about this time married her cousin the Marquis de Listomère, the son of the old relation whom I used to visit at the Isle of Saint-Louis, I gradually made the acquaintance of the most influential people of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

Henriette soon launched me into the heart of the society known as le Petit-Château through the attentions of the Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry, whose step great-niece she was ; so warmly did she write to her on my behalf, that the princess immediately invited me to come to see her ; I cultivated her acquaintance, I succeeded in pleasing her, and she became not only my protectress, but a

friend whose feelings were indescribably maternal. The old princess gladly undertook to connect me with her daughter, Madame d'Espard, with the Duchesse de Langeais, the Vicomtesse de Beauséant and the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, women who successively wielded the sceptre of fashion and who were all the more gracious to me in that I was unassuming with them, and was always ready to be agreeable to them. My brother Charles, far from disowning me, from that moment relied upon me; but this rapid success filled him with a secret jealousy which, later on, gave me much trouble. My father and mother, surprised at this unexpected good fortune, felt flattered in their vanity, and at last adopted me as their son; but, as their feeling was somewhat artificial, not to say affected, this reconciliation had very little influence over an ulcerated heart; besides, affections tainted with egotism stir the sympathies but little; the heart abhors calculation and gain of any kind.

I wrote faithfully to my dear Henriette, who replied by one or two letters every month. Her spirit thus hovered over me, her thoughts traversed the distance and kept me in a pure atmosphere. No woman could captivate me. The king knew of my reserve; in this respect he was of the school of Louis XV., and he laughingly called me: *Mademoiselle de Vandenesse,* but he was mightily pleased with the discretion of my behavior. I am convinced that the patience I had acquired as a habit in childhood and especially at Clochegourde, greatly helped to win me

the good graces of the king, who was always excellent to me. No doubt he took it into his head to read my letters, for he was not long deceived by my spinster-like life. One day, the duke was on duty, I was writing at the dictation of the king, who, seeing the Duc de Lenoncourt coming in, looked at us both mischievously.

"Well, then this devil of a Mortsauf still insists upon living?" he said in his beautiful, silvery voice to which he knew how to communicate at will the poignancy of epigram.

"Just the same as ever," replied the duke.

"The Comtesse de Mortsauf, however, is an angel whom I should much like to see here," continued the king, "but, if I am powerless, my chancellor," he said, turning to me, "will be more successful. You have six months to yourself, I have decided to give you as colleague the young man of whom we were speaking yesterday. Amuse yourself well at Clochegourde, Monsieur Cato!"

And he had himself wheeled out of the room, smiling.

*

I flew like a swallow to Touraine. For the first time, I was about to appear before her whom I loved, not only a little less simple, but also in the apparel of a fashionable young man whose manners had been formed by the most polished circles, whose education had been finished by the most gracious women, who had finally reaped the reward of his sufferings, and who had made use of the experience of the loveliest angel that Heaven ever committed to the care of a child. You know how I had been equipped during the three months of my first visit to Frapesle.

When I returned to Clochegourde at the time of my mission from La Vendée, I was dressed like a huntsman. I wore a green jacket with whity-red buttons, striped trousers, leather gaiters and shoes. The journey and the thickets had made me so untidy, that the count was obliged to lend me some linen. This time, two years' sojourn in Paris, the habit of being with the king, the habiliments of prosperity, my completed growth, a youthful physiognomy which took an inexpressible lustre from the placidity of a soul magnetically united to the pure soul which beamed upon me from Clochegourde, all had trans-

formed me; I was confident, without conceit, I felt an inward satisfaction at finding myself, in spite of my youth, at the summit of affairs; I had the consciousness of being the secret support of the most adorable woman here below, her unavowed hope. Perhaps I felt a slight stir of vanity when the whip of the postilions cracked in the new avenue which led from the Chinon road to Clochegourde, and when a gate that I did not recognize was opened in the middle of a newly-built circular enclosure. I had not written to tell the countess of my arrival, wishing to give her a surprise; and I was doubly wrong; in the first place she experienced the shock that is given by a pleasure long hoped for, but looked upon as impossible; then she proved to me that all calculated surprises were in bad taste.

When Henriette saw before her the young man whom she had hitherto seen only as a child, she bent her eyes upon the ground with a movement of tragic deliberation; she let me take and kiss her hand without evincing any of that inward pleasure that she made known to me by her sensitive shiver; and, when she raised her face to look at me once more, I thought her pale.

"Well, then you do not forget your old friends?" said Monsieur de Mortsauf, who was neither changed nor aged. The two children leaped round my neck. In the doorway I saw the grave face of the Abbé de Dominis, Jacques's tutor.

"No," I said to the count, "hereafter I shall have six months free in every year, and they shall always

belong to you—Well, what is the matter?" I said to the countess, putting my arm round her waist to support her, in the presence of all her family.

"Oh! let me alone!" she said starting, "it is nothing."

I read her mind, and answered her secret thought by saying:

"Then do you no longer recognize your faithful slave?"

She took my arm, left the count, her children, the abbé, the assembled servants, and led me far away from them all by going round the lawn, but remaining within sight; then, when she thought that her voice could not be heard:

"Félix, my friend," she said, "forgive the fear of one who steers by but a single thread through a subterranean labyrinth, and who trembles lest it should snap. Tell me again that I am more than ever your Henriette, that you will never forsake me, that nothing shall prevail against me, that you will always be a devoted friend! I suddenly saw into the future, and you were not there, as you usually are, with a shining face and your eyes upon me; you were turning your back upon me."

"Henriette, idol more worshipped than is God, lily, flower of my life, how is it that you no longer know, you who are my conscience, that I am so well incarnated in your heart that my soul is here when my body is in Paris? Need I tell you that I came here in seventeen hours, that every turn of the wheel bore along a world of thoughts and de-

sires which burst like a tempest the moment I saw you ?—

"Tell me, tell me! I am sure of myself, I can listen to you without any crime. God does not will me to die; He sends you to me as He dispenses His breath to His creations, as He sheds the rain of the clouds upon an arid earth; tell me! tell me! do you love me purely ?"

"Purely."

"For ever ?"

"For ever."

"As a Virgin Mary, who must remain in her veil and beneath her white crown ?"

"As a visible Virgin Mary."

"As a sister ?"

"As a sister too well beloved."

"As a mother ?"

"As a mother secretly desired."

"Chivalrously, without hope ?"

"Chivalrously, but with hope."

"In short, as if you were only twenty and were wearing your poor little blue coat of the ball ?"

"Oh! better. I love you thus, and I love you even more as—"

She looked at me in keen apprehension—

"As you loved your aunt."

"I am happy: you have dispelled my terrors," she said, turning back toward the family, who were astonished at our secret conference, "but be just a child here! you are yet a child. If your policy is to be a man with the king, know, monsieur, that

here it is to remain a child. As a child, you shall be loved. I should always resist the man's force; but what is there that I would refuse the child? Nothing: there can be nothing he wants that I cannot grant him. The secrets are told," she said, looking at the count with a mischievous air in which the girl and her original character reappeared. "I leave you, I am going to dress."

Never, for three years, had I heard her voice so completely happy. For the first time, I perceived those pretty swallow-like cries, those childish notes of which I have told you. I brought a hunting equipment for Jacques, and for Madeleine a work-box which her mother afterwards always used; at last I atoned for the meanness to which I had formerly been condemned by my mother's parsimony. The joy evinced by the children, delighted at showing each other their presents, seemed to annoy the count, who was always peevish when he was not taken notice of. I made Madeleine a sign of intelligence, and followed the count, who wanted to talk to me about himself. He led me toward the terrace; but we stopped on the steps at each serious point with which he entertained me.

"My poor Félix," he said, "you see them all happy and well; as for me, I darken the scene; I have caught their complaints, and I bless God for having given them to me. Formerly, I did not know what was the matter with me; but now, I know; the pylorus is attacked, I can digest nothing."

"By what accident have you become as learned

as a professor in the Medical College?" I said, smiling. "Has your doctor been indiscreet enough to tell you this—?"

"Heaven preserve me from doctors!" he cried, showing the repulsion that most would-be invalids feel for medicine.

Then I had to endure a foolish conversation, in which he made me the most ridiculous confidences, complaining about his wife, his servants, his children and life, while taking evident pleasure in repeating his every-day grumblings to a friend who, not knowing them, might be startled by them, and whom politeness compelled to listen with interest. He must have been pleased with me, for I lent him the most profound attention, while trying to fathom this extraordinary character, and to guess the fresh tortures that he was inflicting upon his wife and which she was keeping from me. Henriette put a stop to this monologue by appearing on the steps; the count saw her, tossed his head and said:

"You listen to me, you do, Félix; but, here, nobody pities me!"

He went off, as if conscious of the damper he had cast over my conversation with Henriette, or as if, through some chivalrous consideration for her, he had known that he was pleasing her by leaving us alone. His character afforded really inexplicable inflections, for he was jealous like all weak men; but then his confidence in his wife's purity was unlimited; it may even be that the sufferings of pride, offended by the superiority of this great virtue, en-

couraged his ceaseless opposition to the wishes of the countess, whom he defied as children defy their masters or their mothers. Jacques was doing his lessons, Madeleine was dressing; so, for about an hour, I was able to walk alone with the countess on the terrace.

"Well, dear angel," I said, "the chain grows heavier, the sands burn, the thorns multiply?"

"Hush!" she said, guessing the thoughts suggested to me by my conversation with the count. "You are here, all is forgotten! I do not suffer at all, I have not suffered!"

She executed a few light steps, as if to ventilate her white dress, to surrender to the gentle breeze her ruches of snowy tulle, her floating sleeves, her fresh ribbons, her cape and the flowing curls of her coiffure à la Sévigné; and I saw her for the first time girlish, gay with her natural gayety, ready to play like a child. I then knew both the tears of happiness and the joy that man feels in giving pleasure.

"Beautiful human flower that my thought caresses and my soul embraces! oh! my lily!" I said, "always intact and straight upon its stem, always white, proud, scented, solitary!"

"Enough, monsieur," she said, smiling. "Talk to me about yourself, tell me everything."

Then beneath this mobile vault of quivering leaves we had a long conversation full of interminable parentheses, taken up, dismissed and resumed, in which I told her all about my life, and my occupations; I

described my apartment in Paris, for she wanted to know everything; and, happiness then unappreciated, I had nothing to hide from her.

Upon thus knowing my soul and all the details of this existence fraught with overwhelming toil, upon learning the extent of these duties in which, without strict honesty, one could so easily cheat and enrich one's self, but which I administered with so much precision that the king, I told her, called me *Mademoiselle de Vandenesse*, she seized my hand and kissed it, dropping upon it a tear of joy. This sudden transposition of rôles, this great eulogy, this thought, so swiftly expressed, but more quickly grasped: "This is the master I would have liked! this is my dream!" all that there was of avowal in this action, in which humility was grandeur, and love revealed itself forbidden to the senses, this tempest of things divine smote me to the heart and overwhelmed me. I felt myself inferior, I would have liked to die at her feet.

"Ah!" I said, "you always surpass us in everything. How could you doubt me? for there was some doubt just now, Henriette."

"Not now," she rejoined, looking at me with an unspeakable gentleness, which, for me alone, veiled the light of her eyes, "but upon finding you so handsome, I said to myself: 'Our plans for Madeleine will be upset by some woman who will divine the treasures hidden in your heart, who will adore you, steal away our Félix and ruin everything here.'"

"Always Madeleine," I said, expressing a surprise which only half distressed her, "so it is to Madeleine that I am faithful?"

We fell into a silence that Monsieur de Mortsauf unluckily interrupted. With a full heart, I had to keep up a conversation bristling with difficulties, in which my candid replies as to the policy at that time pursued by the king clashed with the ideas of the count, who forced me to explain His Majesty's views. In spite of my inquiries about his horses, about the state of his agricultural affairs, as to whether he was satisfied with his five farms, whether he was going to cut down the trees in an old avenue, he would always return to politics with all the importunity of an old maid and the persistence of a child; for this kind of intellect readily rushes in the direction of the light, continually returning and buzzing without penetrating anything, fatiguing the mind just as big flies tire the ear by humming up and down the window-panes. Henriette was silent. In order to put an end to this conversation which the vehemence of youth might have excited, I replied by acquiescent monosyllables, thereby avoiding useless discussions; but Monsieur de Mortsauf was far too intelligent not to be sensible of all that was repellent In my politeness. Then he grew angry at being always in the right, he rebelled, his eyebrows and the wrinkles on his forehead worked, his yellow eyes flashed, and his inflamed nose flushed still deeper, as on the day, when for the first time, I witnessed one of his attacks of madness; Henriette looked at

me imploringly while giving me to understand that she could not exert on my behalf the authority which she employed to justify or defend her children. So I answered the count, taking him seriously and managing his suspicious spirit with extreme tact.

"Poor dear! Poor dear!" she said, repeatedly murmuring these two words which fell upon my ear like a breeze.

Then, when she thought she could successfully interpose, she said, coming to a standstill:

"Do you know, messieurs, that you are quite tiresome?"

Reminded by this interrogation of the chivalrous compliance due to women, the count stopped talking politics; we bored him in our turn by talking nonsense, and he left us to walk up and down at our leisure, declaring that it made him giddy to go over the same space continually.

My gloomy conjectures were correct. The pleasant scenery, the soft atmosphere, the beautiful sky, and the intoxicating poetry of the valley, which for fifteen years had calmed the sick man's galling humors, were now powerless. At a time of life when, with other men, asperities are softened and angles blunted, the old nobleman's temper had become even more aggressive than in the past. For the last few months, he had been contradicting for the sake of contradiction, without reason, and without justifying his opinions; he asked the why and wherefore of everything, fidgeted over any delay or omission,

interfered at every turn in domestic affairs, and insisted upon having an account of the smallest household trifles, so as to weary his wife or her servants by allowing them no sort of free will. At one time, he never got angry without some ostensible motive, now his irritation was constant. It may be that the cares of his fortune, the agricultural speculations, and a life of action had hitherto diverted his splenetic humor by providing food for his restlessness, and by employing his activity of mind; and now perhaps the lack of occupation was driving his illness back upon itself; deprived of any outward exercise it manifested itself in fixed ideas, the mental *I* had mastered the physical *I*. He was his own doctor; he would peruse medical books, believing himself to have the maladies the descriptions of which he read, and then, for his health's sake would take unheard-of, erratic precautions, which were impossible to anticipate, and therefore impossible to satisfy. At one time, he would not have a sound, and, when the countess established absolute silence about him, he would suddenly complain of being as if in a tomb; he said there was a medium between no noise and the nothingness of La Trappe. At another time, he would affect complete indifference to earthly things; the whole house then breathed again, the children played, the household duties were accomplished without any criticism; suddenly, in the midst of the bustle, he would cry mournfully:

"They want to kill me!"—"My dear, were it a question of your children, you would easily find out

what worried them," he would say to his wife, heightening the injustice of these words by the bitter, cold tone with which he accompanied them.

He dressed and undressed at every moment, watching the slightest variations in the atmosphere, and he would do nothing without consulting the barometer. In spite of his wife's motherly attentions, he found no food to his liking, for he declared he had a disordered stomach the painful digestion of which gave him continual attacks of insomnia; nevertheless, he ate, drank, digested and slept with a perfection at which the most learned doctor would have marvelled. His fickle caprices disgusted the servants of the house, who, methodical as are all servants, were unable to adapt themselves to the requirements of unceasingly contrary systems. The count would order the windows to be kept open under the pretext that in the future the open air was necessary to his health, a few days afterward, the open air, either too damp or too warm, became intolerable; then he would scold, begin quarrelling, and, in order to be in the right, would often deny his previous instructions. This defect of memory or bad faith decided in his favor all the discussions in which his wife tried to oppose him. Residence at Clochegourde had become so unbearable, that the Abbé de Dominis, a highly-educated man, resolved to discover the solution of several problems, and intrenched himself in feigned abstraction. The countess no longer expected, as in the past, to be able to hide the fits of insane rage within the circle of the

family; the servants had already witnessed scenes in which the senseless exasperation of this premature old man passed all bounds; they were so devoted to the countess, that nothing of this transpired outside, but every day she dreaded some public outburst of this frenzy which was no longer restrained by fear of the world's opinion. Later on I learned some horrible details of the count's behavior to his wife; instead of comforting her, he overwhelmed her with sinister predictions and made her responsible for the coming misfortunes, because she rejected the absurd remedies to which he wanted to subject his children. Did the countess go for a walk with Jacques and Madeleine, the count would predict a storm, in spite of the clearness of the sky; if by chance the issue justified his prognostication, the satisfaction to his vanity rendered him insensible to his children's harm; were one of them indisposed, the count would devote all his ingenuity to assign the cause of the suffering to the system of care adopted by his wife, which he would criticize in its minutest details, always concluding with these annihilating words: "If your children fall ill again, you will certainly have intended it."

He would behave in this way about the least items of the domestic management, in which he never looked upon any but the worst side of things, at every turn making himself the *devil's advocate,* according to an expression of his old coachman. The countess had appointed different hours for Jacques and Madeleine to take their meals, and had

thus withdrawn them from the terrible influence of the count's malady, while drawing all the storms upon herself. Madeleine and Jacques rarely saw their father. Through one of those delusions peculiar to egotists, the count had not the least consciousness of the harm he was doing. In the confidential talk we had had, he had particularly lamented having been too kind to all his family. And so he wielded the flail, beating and crushing all around him as a monkey might have done; then, after having wounded his victim, he would deny having struck her. Then I understood the origin of those lines drawn as if with the edge of a razor across the countess's forehead, which I had noticed upon seeing her again. With noble minds there is a modesty which prevents them from expressing their sufferings, they proudly conceal the extent of them from those they love through a feeling of exquisite charity. Therefore, in spite of my importunities, I did not wring this confidence from Henriette all at once. She was afraid of distressing me, and made admissions broken by sudden flushes; but I had soon divined the aggravation that the count's idleness had contributed to the domestic troubles of Clochegourde.

"Henriette," I said to her a few days after, proving to her that I had gauged the depth of her fresh miseries, "were you not wrong to arrange your property so well, that the count could find no more to do?"

"Dear," she said smiling, "my position is

sufficiently difficult to require all my vigilance, you may be sure that I have thoroughly studied all its resources, and they are all exhausted. Indeed, the worries have always been growing. As Monsieur de Mortsauf and I are always together, I cannot reduce them by dividing them up into several heads, all would be equally painful to me. I have thought of diverting Monsieur de Mortsauf by advising him to establish silk-breeding at Clochegourde, where there are already a few mulberry-trees, the remains of the old industry of Touraine; but I knew that he would be just as tyrannical at home and that I should have in addition the thousand and one worries of this undertaking. You must know, Monsieur l'Observateur," she said, "that, in youth, the bad qualities of man are restrained by society, arrested in their flight by the play of passions, hampered by the fear of public opinion; later on, in solitude, with an elderly man, the little faults appear to be all the more terrible in that they have been so long repressed. Human weaknesses are essentially cowardly, they admit of neither peace nor truce; whatever you have conceded to them yesterday, they exact to-day, tomorrow and always; they are founded upon concessions and expand them. Power is merciful, it yields to evidence, it is just and peaceable; whilst the passions engendered by weakness are pitiless; they are only pleased when they can follow the example of those children who prefer the stolen fruits in secret to those they can eat at table;

and so Monsieur de Mortsauf experiences real pleasure in taking advantage of me; and he who would never deceive anybody deceives me with delight, provided that the deceit goes no further than the home tribunal."

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About a month after my arrival, one morning, upon getting up from breakfast, the countess seized me by the arm, escaped through a glass door which opened upon the orchard, and dragged me quickly into the vineyard.

"Ah! he will kill me!" she said, "And yet, I want to live were it only for the children! What! never a day's respite? To walk for ever in the briars, nearly falling at every moment, and at every moment collecting one's strength to keep one's balance? No human being could meet such waste of energy. If I were sure of the ground against which my efforts were to be directed, if my resistance were determined, the mind would adapt itself; but no, each day the character of the attack varies, and surprises me without defence; my misery is not single, it is multiple. Félix, Félix, you cannot possibly imagine the odious shape his tyranny has assumed, and what barbarous demands have been suggested to him by his medical books. Oh! my friend!—" she said, leaning her head on my shoulder without completing her confidence, "What is to become of me? what shall I do?" she con-

tinued, writhing under the thoughts that she had not uttered, "How am I to resist? He will kill me. No, I will kill myself, and yet that is a crime! Run away? and my children! Get a separation? but how, after fifteen years of marriage, am I to tell my father that I cannot live with Monsieur de Mortsauf, when, if my father or my mother were to come, he would be quiet, sensible, polite, intelligent? Besides, have married women any fathers, or mothers? They belong body and goods, to their husbands. I was living quietly, if not happily, I was imbibing a certain strength from my chaste solitude, I admit; but, if I am deprived of this negative happiness, I too, should go mad. My resistance is based upon strong reasons which are not personal to me. Is it not a crime to give birth to poor creatures who are condemned beforehand to perpetual misery? And yet, my behavior raises such serious issues, that I cannot decide them alone; I am both judge and plaintiff. I will go to Tours to-morrow to consult the Abbé Birotteau, my new confessor; for my dear, virtuous Abbé de la Berge is dead," she said, breaking off, "Although he was strict, I shall always miss his apostolic force; his successor is an angel of mildness, who pities instead of rebuking; however, what courage would not be revived in the heart of religion? what reason would not become fortified at the voice of the Holy Spirit?—My God," she continued, drying her tears and raising her eyes to Heaven, "for what art Thou punishing me? But, it is certain," she said, pressing her fingers upon my arm, "yes,

depend upon it, Félix, we must pass through a burning crucible before attaining, holy and perfect, to higher spheres. Ought I to be silent? dost Thou forbid me, oh God! to cry out in the bosom of a friend? do I love him too much?"

She strained me to her heart, as if she were afraid of losing me.

"Who can solve me these doubts? My conscience does not reproach me in any way. The stars shine from on high upon men; why should not the soul, that human star, encircle a friend with its fires, when one allows none but the purest thoughts to go out to him?"

I listened to this terrible outcry in silence, holding the woman's moist hand in mine, which was damper still; I squeezed it with a force which Henriette returned with equal force.

"So you are here?" cried the count, who was coming toward us, his head bare.

Ever since my return, he had obstinately persisted in joining in our conversations, either because he expected to get some amusement out of them, or because he fancied that the countess was confiding her troubles to me and sighing on my breast, or still more because he was jealous of a pleasure in which he did not participate.

"How he pursues me!" she said in a tone of despair, "let us go and see the vines, then we shall escape him. Bend down along the hedges so that he does not see us."

We sheltered ourselves behind a leafy hedge,

gained the vineyard at a run, and soon found ourselves far away from the count, in an alley of almond-trees.

"Dear Henriette," I then said, pressing her arm against my heart and stopping to look at her in her distress, "not long ago you skilfully guided me through the dangerous paths of society; let me give you a few hints to help you to finish the duel in which, unseconded, you will infallibly succumb, for you are not fighting with the same weapons. Do not struggle with a madman—"

"Hush!" she said, repressing the tears which swam in her eyes.

"Listen to me, dear one! After one hour of these conversations that I am obliged to endure for your sake, my meaning is perverted, my head is heavy; the count makes me mistrust my own intelligence, the same ideas reiterated imprint themselves in spite of myself upon my brain. Well-defined manias are not contagious; but, when madness exists in the way of looking at things, and it lurks beneath constant discussions, it may work havoc upon those who live near it. Your patience is sublime, but does it not drive you to degradation? Therefore, for your own sake, as well as for your children's, change your system with the count. Your divine complaisance has developed his selfishness, you have treated him as a mother treats a child that she spoils; but, now, if you want to live—and," I said, looking at her, "you do want to! use the influence you have over him. You know, he loves

and fears you, make yourself still more feared, oppose his vague desires with an inflexible will. Extend your power as he himself has known how to extend the concessions that you have made him, and restrict his malady to a moral sphere, just as one confines the insane in an asylum."

"Dear child," she said, smiling bitterly, "a heartless woman only could play this rôle. I am a mother, I should make a bad executioner. Yes, I know how to suffer, but to make others suffer! never!" she said, "not even to obtain an honorable or great result. Besides, should I not have to belie my heart, disguise my voice, harden my brow and alter my gestures?—Do not ask such lies of me. I can stand between Monsieur de Mortsauf and his children, I will take his blows so that no one here shall be hurt; that is all I can do to reconcile so many conflicting interests."

"Let me worship you! blessed, thrice blessed!' I said, kneeling upon one knee, kissing her dress and there wiping away the tears that came to my eyes,—"But, suppose he kills you?" I said.

She turned pale, and replied by raising her eyes to Heaven:

"The will of God will be done!"

"Do you know what the king said to your father about you? 'Then that devil of a Mortsauf is still alive?'"

"What is a joke upon the king's lips," she replied, "is a crime here."

In spite of our precautions, the count had tracked

us; he came up to us all in a perspiration, under a walnut-tree where the countess had stopped to have this serious talk with me; upon seeing him, I began to talk of the vintage. Had he any unjust suspicions? I do not know; but he stood without saying a word, examining us, paying no heed to the dampness exhaled from the walnut-trees. After a moment spent in a few unmeaning words interspersed with very significant pauses, the count said he felt sick and had a headache; he complained quietly, without seeking our pity, without depicting his pains in exaggerated images. We paid him no sort of attention. Upon coming in, he felt still worse, spoke about going to bed, and went there without more ado, with unusual simplicity. We took advantage of the truce afforded us by his hypochondriacal humor, and went down to our beloved terrace, accompanied by Madeleine.

"Let us go for a row," said the countess, after a few turns, "we will go and help the keeper who is fishing for us to-day."

We go out by the little door, gain the ferryboat, jump into it, and off we go, slowly ascending the Indre. Like three children amused at trifles, we looked at the weeds on the banks, at the blue or green dragon-flies; and the countess wondered at being able to enjoy such tranquil pleasures in the midst of her piercing sorrows; but does not the repose of nature, which moves unheedful of our struggles, exercise a soothing spell upon us? The restlessness of a love full of repressed longings

harmonizes with that of the water, the flowers unperverted by the hand of man declare his most secret dreams, the voluptuous swaying of a boat vaguely resembles the thoughts that float in the mind. We felt the enervating influence of this twofold poetry. Words, attuned to nature's diapason, manifested a mysterious grace, and looks were all the more radiant from partaking of the sunlight so copiously shed upon the shining meadowland. The river was like a path along which we were flying. Indeed, being undiverted by the movement required in walking, our spirit took complete hold of creation. Was not the riotous delight of a little girl at large, with her graceful gestures and bewitching remarks, also the living expression of two free souls who were revelling in making an ideal construction of that wonderful fabric dreamed of by Plato, known to all those whose youth was filled by a happy love? In order to describe this hour to you, not in its indescribable details, but in its entirety, I should tell you that we loved each other in all the beings, all the things around us; we felt all about us the happiness that each of us desired; it penetrated us so keenly, that the countess took off her gloves and let her beautiful hands sink into the water as if to cool some secret ardor. Her eyes spoke; but her mouth, half opening like a rose to the air, would have closed itself to desire. You know the harmony of low and high notes perfectly blended, it has always reminded me of the union of our two souls at that moment, which can never occur again.

"Where do you fish," I said, "if you can only fish from your own banks?"

"Near Pont-de-Ruan," she said, "Ah! the river now belongs to us from Pont-de-Ruan as far as Clochegourde. Monsieur de Mortsauf has just bought forty acres of grassland with the savings of the last two years and the arrears of his pension. Do you wonder?"

"I, I should like the whole valley to belong to you!" I cried.

She answered with a smile. We arrived below Pont-de-Ruan, at a spot where the Indre widens, and where they were fishing.

"Well, Martineau?" she said.

"Ah! Madame la Comtesse, we have no luck. All the three hours that we have been here, coming up from the mill here, we have caught nothing."

We landed, so as to assist in the last cast of the net, and we sat down all three under the shade of a *bouillard,* a kind of poplar with a white bark, which is found upon the Danube, the Loire, probably upon all large rivers, and which in springtime sheds a white silky down, the outer covering of its flower. The countess had recovered her dignified serenity; she almost repented having disclosed her troubles to me and for having cried out like Job, instead of mourning like a Magdalen, a Magdalen without love, or fêtes, or distractions, but not without fragrance or beauty. The net drawn to her feet was full of fish: tench, barbel, pike, perch, and an enormous carp jumping about on the grass.

"It is a miracle!" said the keeper.

The workmen opened their eyes in admiration of this woman who was like a fairy whose wand had touched the nets. Just at that moment, the groom appeared, riding across the fields at full gallop, and put her into a state of terrible trepidation. Jacques was not with us, and a mother's first thought, as Virgil so poetically says, is to snatch her children to her breast at the slightest occasion.

"Jacques!" she cried. "Where is Jacques? What has happened to my son?"

She did not love me! Had she loved me, she would have had the same expression of leonine desperation at my sufferings.

"Madame la Comtesse, Monsieur le Comte feels worse."

She drew her breath, and hurried with me, followed by Madeleine.

"Come back slowly," she said to me, "so that this dear child does not get overheated. You see that Monsieur de Mortsauf's race in this hot weather threw him into a perspiration, and his stand under the walnut-tree may be the cause of a misfortune."

This word, spoken in the midst of her trouble, revealed her purity of mind.

The count's death a misfortune! She reached Clochegourde rapidly, passed through a breach in a wall and crossed the vineyards. I did indeed return slowly. Henriette's expression had enlightened me, but just as does the lightning which destroys the ingathered harvests. During that

row upon the water, I had thought myself preferred; I realized bitterly that her words were sincere. The lover who is not all is nothing. So I loved alone, with the desires of a love which knows all that it wants, and feeds itself in advance by the hoped-for caresses, and contents itself with the pleasures of the mind because with them it blends those which the future holds for it. Even if Henriette loved, she knew nothing either of the pleasures of love or of its storms. She lived upon the sentiment itself, just like a saint with God. I was the object to which her thoughts and her unrequited sensations had attached themselves, just as a swarm fastens itself to some branch of a flowering tree; but I was not the principle, I was an accident in her life, I was not her life itself. A dethroned king, I walked along, wondering who could restore to me my kingdom. In my mad jealousy, I blamed myself for not having attempted anything, for not having tightened the links of a tenderness which now seemed to me more subtle than sincere, by the chains of the absolute right which possession establishes.

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The count's indisposition, brought on perhaps by the chill of the walnut-tree, became serious in a few hours. I went to Tours to fetch a celebrated physician, Monsieur Origet, whom I could not bring back until the evening; but he stayed all night and all the next day at Clochegourde. Although he had sent the groom for a large quantity of leeches, he considered an immediate bleeding to be important, and he had no lancet about him. I at once rushed to Azay in the most dreadful weather, roused the surgeon, Monsieur Deslandes, and made him come with the speed of a bird. Ten minutes more and the count would have succumbed; the bleeding saved him. In spite of this first success, the doctor predicted the most pernicious inflammatory fever, one of those illnesses that happen to people who have been in good health for twenty years. The countess, overcome, thought she was the cause of this fatal crisis. Too much unnerved to thank me for my attentions, she contented herself with giving me an occasional smile, the expression of which matched the kiss she had imprinted upon my hand; I would fain have read in it the remorse of an illicit

love, but it was the act of contrition of a repentance which was painful to witness in so pure a soul, it was a declaration of admiring tenderness for a man she looked upon as noble, reproaching herself alone for an imaginary crime. Most assuredly she loved, as Laura de Noves loved Petrarch, not as Francesca da Rimini loved Paola: an awful discovery for whomsoever should dream of the union of both these loves! The countess lay, with sunken body and drooping arms, upon a dirty sofa in this room, which was like a wild boar's lair. The next evening, before leaving, the doctor told the countess, who had sat up all night, to get a nurse. The illness would last a long time.

"A nurse," she replied, "no! no! We will nurse him!" she cried, looking at me, "it is our duty to save him!"

At this outcry, the doctor glanced at us searchingly, full of astonishment. The expression of this speech was calculated to make him suspect some frustrated crime. He promised to return twice a week, told Monsieur Deslandes what course to pursue, and described the threatening symptoms that might require him to be summoned from Tours.

In order to procure at least one night's sleep out of every two for the countess, I asked her to let me watch the count by turns with her. And so I persuaded her, not without difficulty, to go to bed the third night. When all was quiet in the house, during a moment when the count was dozing, I heard a sad wail coming from Henriette's room. My anxiety

became so keen, that I went to seek her out; she was kneeling in front of her prie-Dieu, dissolved in tears, and was accusing herself:

"Oh! God! if this is the price of a murmur," she was crying, "I will never complain again!—you have left him!" she said, perceiving me.

"I heard you crying and moaning, I was alarmed about you."

"Oh! me," she said, "I am all right!"

She wanted to be sure that Monsieur de Mortsauf was asleep; we both went down, and by the light of a lamp we both looked at him: the count was more exhausted by the quantity of blood drawn from him than overcome by asleep; his restless hands were trying to pull his cover up over him.

"They say that that is the movement of the dying," she said. "Ah! if he were to die of this illness that we have caused, I would never marry, I swear it," she added, stretching her hand over the count's head with a solemn gesture.

"I have done all I could to save him," I said.

"Oh! you, you are good," she said, "but I, I am the great sinner."

She bent down over the distorted forehead, wiped away the perspiration with her hair, and kissed it devoutly; but it was not without secret joy that I saw she acquitted herself of this caress as of an atonement.

"Blanche, drink!" said the count, faintly.

"You see, he knows no one but me," she said, bringing him a glass.

And, by her accent, by her affectionate manner, she sought to disparage the feelings that bound us, by sacrificing them to the sick man.

"Henriette," I said, "go and rest, I beg of you."

"No more Henriette," she said, interrupting me with imperious haste.

"Go to bed, so as not to fall ill. Your children, *he himself,* enjoin you to take care of yourself: there are occasions when selfishness becomes a sublime virtue."

"Yes," she said.

She went away, intrusting her husband to me with gestures that might have implied some approaching delirium, had they not possessed the graces of childishness mingled with the beseeching force of repentance. This scene, terrible in comparison with the ordinary state of this pure mind, frightened me: I feared her fanaticism of conscience. When the doctor came again, I informed him of the qualms—like those of a startled ermine—which were stabbing my innocent Henriette. Although discreet, this confidence dispelled the suspicions of Monsieur Origet, and he quieted the excitement of this noble mind by saying that in any case the count would have had to suffer this attack, and that his halt under the walnut-tree had been more beneficial than injurious by determining the malady.

For fifty-two days, the count was between life and death; we each watched in turn, Henriette and I, for twenty-six nights.

It is certain that Monsieur de Mortsauf owed his

recovery to our care, and to the scrupulous accuracy with which we carried out Monsieur Origet's orders. Like those philosophical doctors whose shrewd observations justify them in doubting all good actions, when they are nothing but the secret fulfilment of a duty, this man, even while assisting in the heroic struggle which was going on between the countess and me, could not help watching us with inquisitive glances, so much did he fear being deceived in his admiration.

"In such a sickness," he said to me at the time of his third visit, "death encounters an active auxiliary in the mind, when it happens to be as seriously perverted as is the count's. The doctor, the nurse, the servants who surround the invalid hold his life in their hands; for at such a time, a single word, any keen anxiety expressed in a gesture, has the virtue of poison."

While speaking to me in this way, Origet was studying my face and my demeanor; but he saw in my eyes the clear expression of an honest soul. And in fact, during the course of this painful illness, there did not come into my mind the very faintest of those involuntary, bad ideas which sometimes flash across the most innocent conscience. To whomsoever contemplates Nature at large, everything in it tends to unity through assimilation. The moral world must be governed by an analogous principle. In a pure sphere, all is pure. With Henriette, one breathed a heavenly fragrance, it seemed as if any dishonorable desire must estrange

one from her for ever. Thus, not only was she happiness itself, but virtue also. Finding us always equally attentive and careful, the doctor showed an indefinable reverence and tenderness in his words and manners; he seemed to be saying to himself: "These are the real sick, they hide their hurt and forget it!"

By a contrast which, according to this worthy man, was sufficiently common with men who were thus impaired, Monsieur de Mortsauf was patient, full of obedience, never complained and showed the most wonderful docility, he who, when well, never did the simplest thing without endless protests. The cause of this submission to medicine, once so strongly repudiated, was a secret fear of death, another contradiction in a man of undeniable courage! This fear might sufficiently account for several of the eccentricities of the new character that his misfortunes had given him.

Shall I admit to you, Natalie, and would you believe it? these fifty days and the month which followed them were the happiest moments of my life. Is not love in the infinite regions of the soul like the great river in a beautiful valley to which the rains, the rivulets and torrents all throng, into which the trees, the flowers, the gravel from the banks and the highest masses of rock all fall? It is as much fed by storms as by the sluggish tribute of the clear springs. Yes, when one loves, all comes to love. The first great danger past, the countess and I became accustomed to the malady. In spite of the in-

cessant disorder introduced by the attentions required by the count, his room, which we had found so ill kept, became clean and pretty. Before long we were in it like two beings stranded on a desert island; for misfortunes not only isolate, but they silence the wretched conventions of society. And then the interest of the sick man forced points of contact upon us which no other emergency would have authorized.

How often our hands, before so timid, met in rendering some service to the count! was I not bound to support, to help Henriette? Often, constrained by a necessity like that of a soldier on sentry, she would forget to eat; then I would serve her, sometimes upon her knees, with a hasty meal, which necessitated a thousand little attentions. It was a scene of childhood beside a yawning tomb. She eagerly bade me make the preparations that might spare the count any suffering, and made use of me in many minor tasks. At first, when the intensity of the danger, as in battle, obliterated the subtle distinctions which mark the events of everyday life, she necessarily suspended the decorum that every woman, even the most unsophisticated, observes in her words, her looks and her demeanor when she is in society or with her family, and which is not consistent with undress. Did she not come to wake me at the first twitter of the birds, in her morning wrapper, which sometimes allowed me a glimpse of the dazzling treasures which, in my fond hopes, I looked upon as mine? Even while remain-

ing imposing and proud, could she not also be unconstrained? Moreover, during the first days, the danger so completely eliminated any impassioned significance from the familiarity of our intimate union, that she saw no harm in it; then, when reflection came, she possibly thought that it would be an insult to herself as well as to me to change her ways. Insensibly we found ourselves domesticated, half married. She showed herself nobly confident, as sure of me as of herself. And so I penetrated still deeper into her heart. The countess became once more my Henriette, Henriette compelled to a greater love of him who strove to be her second self. Soon, I no longer had to wait for her hand, which was always irresistibly yielded at the least entreating look; I was able, without her shrinking from view, to trace the lines of her beautiful figure with intoxication during the long hours in which we listened to the sick man's slumber. The slender gratifications we permitted ourselves, the softened glances, the words spoken in a low voice for fear of waking the count, the fears, the hopes repeated again and again, in short, all the many incidents of this complete fusion of two hearts so long divided, stand out sharply from the painful gloom of the actual scene. We became thoroughly acquainted with each other's souls in this trial which often weakens the strongest affections which cannot stand the test of the hourly intercourse, and which drift apart upon experiencing this constant cohesion in which life is either heavy or easy to bear. You know what havoc is caused

by a master's illness, what interruption to business, and how little time there is for everything; the deadlock in his life upsets the action of his household and family. Although everything had fallen upon Madame de Mortsauf, the count had still been of some use outside; he used to go and talk to the farmers; visit the agents, and receive the funds; if she was the spirit, he was the body. I constituted myself her steward so that she might nurse the count without endangering anything out of doors. She accepted it all without any fuss, without any thanks. These joint cares for the house, these orders transmitted in her name, made another still sweeter bond of union. In the evenings, I would often talk with her, in her room, about her own interests and those of her children. These chats gave an even greater semblance to our ephemeral marriage. How greatly Henriette enjoyed letting me play her husband's rôle, making me occupy his place at table, sending me to speak to the keeper; and all in absolute innocence, but not without that secret pleasure which the most virtuous woman in the world feels in hitting upon an expedient which combines strict compliance with the laws and the gratification of her unavowed desires.

Nullified by sickness, the count no longer weighed upon his wife or his household; and then the countess was herself, she had the right to think of me, and make me the object of numberless attentions. What joy when I discovered her idea, vaguely conceived perhaps, but deliciously expressed, of

revealing to me the whole worth of her person and qualities, of making me observe the change that was produced in her if she were understood! This flower, incessantly closed in the chill atmosphere of her home, expanded under my glances, and for me alone; she took as much delight in unfolding herself as I felt at looking upon her with the eager eyes of love. She proved to me in all the details of life, how much I was in her mind. The day upon which, after having spent the night at the invalid's bedside, I slept late, Henriette got up early, before everyone, and established the most absolute silence around me; without being told, Jacques and Madeleine played at a distance; she employed a thousand wiles in order to acquire the right to lay the table for me herself; and then, she waited upon me, with what sparkling delight in her movements, what shy, swallow-like delicacy, what blushes, what quivers in the voice, what lynx-like subtlety!

These expansions of the soul speak for themselves! She was often overcome with fatigue; but, if by any chance in these moments of weariness it was a question of myself, for me as for her children she would muster up fresh strength, and would start up agile, eager and glad. How she loved to radiate her tenderness around! Ah! Natalie, yes, there are women here below who share the privileges of angelic spirits, and like them diffuse that light which Saint-Martin, the Mysterious Philosopher, described as intelligent, musical and fragrant. Henriette, sure of my discretion, took delight in raising

the heavy curtain that hides the future from us, by showing me the two women within her: the enslaved woman who had fascinated me in spite of her rebuffs, and the free woman whose sweetness was to immortalize my love. What a contrast! Madame de Mortsauf was the Bengaly transported to chilly Europe, sadly seated upon its perch, mute and pining in the cage to which it is confined by the naturalist; Henriette was the same bird singing its oriental poems in its grove beside the Ganges, and, like a living jewel, flying from branch to branch amid the roses of an immense flowering volkameria. Her beauty increased, her spirit revived. This continual rejoicing was a secret between our two souls, for Henriette dreaded the eye of the Abbé de Dominis, that representative of society, far more than she did that of Monsieur de Mortsauf; but, like me, she took great pleasure in giving ingenious turns to her thoughts; she hid her happiness under pleasantry, and also disguised the evidences of fondness under the bright canopy of gratitude.

"We have put your friendship to severe tests, Félix! We can surely allow him the licence we give to Jacques, monsieur l'abbé?" she would say at table.

The stern abbé would answer her with the kindly smile of the holy man who reads within the heart and finds it pure; moreover, he felt for the countess all the respect mingled with adoration that the angels inspire. Twice, in these fifty days, the countess may have encroached upon the limits to

which our affection was confined; but even then these two incidents were enwrapped in a mist that never rose until the day of supreme avowal. One morning, in the early days of the count's sickness, just as she was repenting having treated me so severely by withdrawing the innocent privileges accorded to my chaste tenderness, I was waiting for her, she was to take my place. Overtired, I had fallen asleep, with my head against the wall. I was suddenly wakened by feeling my forehead touched by something indescribably cool which gave me a sensation as if a rose had been laid upon it. I saw the countess three feet away from me, and she said: "I am here."

I went off; but, in wishing her good morning, I took her hand, and felt that it was moist and trembling.

"Are you suffering?" I said.

"Why do you ask me that?" she inquired.

I looked at her, blushing, confused.

"I was dreaming," I replied.

One evening, during the last visits of Monsieur Origet, who had positively proclaimed the count's convalescence, I happened to be under the porch with Jacques and Madeleine, where we were all three lounging on the steps, absorbed in the attention required by a game of spellicans which we were playing with straw stems and hooks charged with pins. Monsieur de Mortsauf was asleep. While waiting for the carriage, the doctor and the countess were talking in low tones in the salon. Mon-

sieur Origet left without my noticing his departure. After having seen him off, Henriette leaned out of the window, from where she contemplated us some little time doubtless, unknown to us. It was one of those hot evenings in which the sky assumes a coppery tint, and the country echoes with a multitude of confused sounds. A last ray of sunlight was fading on the housetops, the flowers in the garden were scenting the breezes, the bells of the cattle being driven to the stables resounded in the distance. We fell in with the silence of this balmy hour by hushing our cries, for fear of waking the count. Suddenly, in spite of the fluttering sound of a dress, I heard the inarticulate contraction of a violently stifled sigh; I rushed into the salon, there I saw the countess seated in an embrasure of the window, a handkerchief to her face; she recognized my step, and made an imperious gesture to order me to leave her alone. I came, my heart pierced with anxiety, and tried to remove her handkerchief by force, her face was bathed in tears; she fled to her room, and only left it for prayers. For the first time in fifty days, I led her out upon the terrace, and demanded the reason of her emotion; but she assumed the wildest gayety and accounted for it by the good news Origet had given her.

"Henriette, Henriette," I said, "you knew that when I saw you crying. Between us two, a lie would be a monstrosity. Why did you prevent me from wiping away those tears? Were they then connected with me?"

"I thought," she said, "that, for me, this illness had been like a halt in sorrow. Now I no longer tremble for Monsieur de Mortsauf, I tremble for myself."

She was right. The count's recovery manifested itself in a return to his capricious humor; he began to say that neither his wife, nor I, nor the doctor, knew how to take care of him, that we were all ignorant both of his malady and his temperament, of his sufferings and the suitable remedies. Origet, infatuated by I know not what doctrine, saw a diminution in the humors, whereas he ought only to attend to the pylorus. One day, he looked at us maliciously like one who had watched us or else found us out, and he said smiling to his wife:

"Well, my dear, had I died, you would have regretted me, no doubt; but, confess, you would have resigned yourself—"

"I should have worn court mourning, pink and black," she replied, laughing, so as to silence her husband.

But there arose, particularly in regard to the food, which the doctor had wisely limited, objecting to the convalescent's hunger being satisfied, scenes of violence and clamors which could be compared to nothing in the past, for the count's temper appeared to be all the more terrible, in that it had been lying dormant, so to speak. Fortified by the doctor's orders and the obedience of her servants; prompted by me, who saw in this struggle the means of teaching her to exercise her authority over her husband,

the countess nerved herself to resistance ; she learned how to encounter frenzy and shrieks with an unruffled brow ; taking him for what he was, a child, she became used to hearing his insulting epithets. I was glad to see her at last understanding the management of this morbid spirit. The count protested, but he obeyed, and he was particularly obedient after having made a great outcry. In spite of the evidence of the results, Henriette sometimes wept at the sight of this poor, feeble old man, with a forehead yellower than the falling leaf, with faded eyes, and trembling hands ; she accused herself of severity, and she could not often resist the joy she saw in the count's eyes when, in measuring out his meals, she exceeded the doctor's orders. She also showed more gentleness and graciousness to him than she had to me ; yet there were distinctions which filled my heart with boundless joy. She was not indefatigable, she knew when to call her servants to wait upon the count when his caprices followed one upon another a little too rapidly and when he complained of not being understood.

The countess wished to go and give thanks to God for Monsieur de Mortsauf's recovery, she caused mass to be said and asked me to give her my arm to go to church ; I took her there ; but, all the time the mass lasted, I went to call upon Monsieur and Madame de Chessel. On our return, she tried to scold me.

"Henriette," I said, "I am incapable of hypocrisy. I can jump into the water to save my drown-

ing enemy, give him my cloak so as to warm him; in fact, I could forgive him, but I should never forget the offence."

She was silent, and pressed my arm to her heart.

"You are an angel, you could not help being sincere in your acts of grace," I continued, "the mother of the Prince of Peace was saved from the hands of a furious populace who wanted to kill her, and, when the queen asked her 'what were you doing?' she replied: 'I was praying for them!' Women are like this. I, I am a man and consequently imperfect."

"Do not libel yourself," she said, shaking my arm violently, "perhaps you are better than I am."

"Yes," I rejoined, "for I would sacrifice eternity for a single day's happiness, and you!—"

"And I?" she said, looking at me proudly.

I held my tongue and bent my eyes to avoid her withering glance.

"I!" she repeated, "of what *I* do you speak? I feel a great many *I's* within me! 'These two children," she added, pointing to Madeleine and Jacques, "are *I's*. Félix," she said in heartrending accents, "do you then think me selfish? Do you think that I could sacrifice all eternity to reward him who sacrifices his life for me? This is a horrible thought, it must always clash with the sentiments of religion. Can a woman so fallen ever recover? Can her happiness absolve her? You compel me to decide these questions at once!—Yes, I will at last entrust you with a secret belong-

ing to my private thoughts; this idea has often troubled my mind, I have often atoned for it by severe penances, it was the cause of those tears that you asked me about the day before yesterday."

"Do you not attach too much importance to certain things that ordinary women value very highly, and that you ought—?"

"Oh!" she said, interrupting me, "do you attach any less to them?"

This logic put an end to all argument.

"Well, then," she continued, "listen to this! Yes, I should have been cowardly enough to desert this poor old man whose life I am! But, my friend, these two little, feeble creatures who are in front of us, Madeleine and Jacques, should they not stay with their father? Well, do you believe, I ask you, do you believe that they would live three months under the insane dominion of this man? If, in failing in my duties, it were only a question of myself—"—She broke into a superb smile—"But would it not be killing my two children? Their death would be certain. My God!" she cried, "why do we speak of such things? Marry, and leave me to die!"

She said these words in so bitter, so deep a tone, that she stifled my rebellious passion.

"You cried out, up there, under that walnut-tree; I have just cried out under these alders, that is all. I shall be silent in future."

"Your generosity is killing me," she said, raising her eyes to Heaven.

We had reached the terrace, and there we found the count seated in an armchair, in the sun. The sight of this shrunken face, hardly animated by a feeble smile, quenched the flames that had leaped from the embers. I leaned upon the balustrade, contemplating the picture presented by this dying man, between his two sickly children, and his wife, pale from the night-watches, wasted by excessive toil, by the anxieties and maybe the joys of these two terrible months, but whose color was now tremendously heightened by the emotions of this scene. At the sight of this suffering family, framed in flickering leaves through which the gray light of a cloudy autumn sky was peeping, I felt the links which bind the body to the soul loosening within me. For the first time, I experienced that moral spleen which, they say, is felt by the stoutest wrestlers in the height of their contests, a species of dispassionate insanity which makes a coward of the bravest man, a fanatic of an unbeliever, which produces indifference to everything, even to the most vital sentiments, to honor, to love; for doubt deprives us of knowledge of ourselves, and sickens us of life. Poor nervous creatures whose wealth of organization delivers defenceless to I know not what fatal spirit, where are your peers and your judges? I understand how the young dare-devil who was already stretching forth his hand upon the baton of the marshals of France, as much a skilful negotiator as an intrepid captain, had been able to become the innocent assassin that I was contempla-

IN MME. DE MORTSAUF'S BOUDOIR

I begged her to tell me her thoughts.

"Have I any?" she said.

She dragged me into her room, made me sit down on her couch, rummaged in the drawer of her dressing-table, knelt down before me and said:

"Here is the hair that I have been losing for a year."

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ting! Could my desires, to-day enwreathed with roses, have such an end in view? Horrified by the cause as much as by the effect, asking, like the impious, whether there were any Providence here below, I could not hold back two tears which rolled down my cheeks.

"Dear Félix, what is the matter?" said Madeleine in her childish voice.

Then Henriette completed the dispersion of these dark vapors and gloomy thoughts by a look of solicitude which flooded my soul like the sunlight. Just at that moment, the old groom brought me a letter from Tours, the sight of which wrung from me an indescribable cry of surprise, and which had the result of setting Madame de Mortsauf in a tremble. I saw the seal of the cabinet, the king recalled me. I held the letter out to her, she read it at a glance.

"He is going!" said the count.

"What will become of me?" she said, for the first time foreseeing her sunless desert.

We stood in a stupor of thought which oppressed us all equally, for we had never so thoroughly realized that we were all necessary to one another. The countess, in talking to me on all subjects, even the most insignificant, had a new sound in her voice, as if the instrument had lost several strings, and that the others had relaxed. Her gestures were apathetic and her eyes dull. I begged her to tell me her thoughts.

"Have I any?" she said.

She dragged me into her room, made me sit down

on her couch, rummaged in the drawer of her dressing-table, knelt down before me and said:

"Here is the hair that I have been losing for a year, take it, it is indeed yours, one day you will know how and why."

I stooped slowly toward her forehead, she did not bend down to avoid my lips, I pressed them reverently, without sinful intoxication, or excitable delight, but with solemn tenderness. Did she wish to sacrifice everything? Or was she only going, as I had done, to the edge of the precipice? Had love induced her to surrender herself, she would not have had this profound composure, this devout expression, and she would not have said to me in her pure voice:

"You are not angry with me?"

I left at nightfall, she insisted upon accompanying me as far as the road to Frapesle, and we stopped at the walnut-tree; I pointed it out to her, telling her how, from there, I had seen her four years before.

"The valley was very lovely!" I cried.

"And now?" she rejoined eagerly.

"You are under the walnut-tree," I said, "and the valley is ours."

She bowed her head, and we said good-bye there. She got up again into her carriage with Madeleine, and I into mine, alone.

*

On my return to Paris, I was fortunately absorbed by pressing labors which afforded me violent distraction and forced me to shun society, which forgot me. I corresponded with Madame de Mortsauf, to whom I sent my journal every week, and who answered me twice a month. An obscure, full life, like those luxuriant, flowering and secret spots, that I had but lately admired in the depths of the woods while composing fresh poems of flowers during the two last weeks.

Oh! You who love! tax yourselves with these glorious obligations, undertake to carry out rules, just like those with which the Church has provided Christians for every day. Those are grand conceptions, the strict observances instituted by the Roman religion, they always score the soul still deeper with the furrows of duty by the repetition of acts which maintain both hope and fear. Feelings always flow strong in these hollowed streams which restrain the waters, purifying them, incessantly refreshing the heart, and fertilizing the life by the abundant treasures of a hidden faith, a divine source at which the unique thought of a unique love renews itself.

My passion, which revived the Middle Ages and recalled chivalry, was known I know not how ; perhaps the king and the Duc de Lenoncourt talked about it. From this exalted sphere, the both romantic and simple story of a young man who religiously worshipped a beautiful woman without notoriety, strong in her solitude, faithful without the support of duty, was no doubt spread in the very heart of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. In the salons, I found myself the object of embarrassing attention, for a humble life has advantages which, once experienced, make the display of a constant mise-en-scène unbearable. Just as eyes accustomed to seeing nothing but quiet hues are hurt by broad daylight, so are there certain spirits that are annoyed by violent contrasts. I was like that then ; you may wonder at that to-day ; but have patience, the eccentricities of the present Vandenesse will be accounted for. And so I found the women kind and society perfect toward me. After the marriage of the Duc de Berri,. the Court resumed its magnificence and the French fêtes revived. Foreign occupation had ceased, prosperity was reappearing, gayeties were possible. Persons celebrated for their rank, or noted for their wealth, from all points of Europe crowded the capital of intelligence where are to be found all the advantages of other countries as well as their vices, magnified and stimulated by French ingenuity.

Five months after having left Clochegourde, in the middle of winter, my good angel wrote me a des-

perate letter, telling me about the serious illness of her son, from which he had recovered, but which left anxiety for the future ; the doctor had spoken of precautions to be taken about the chest, an awful word, which, when uttered by science, darkens all a mother's moments.

Hardly had Henriette begun to breathe more freely, hardly had Jacques reached convalescence, when his sister inspired alarm. Madeleine, that pretty blossom which flourished so well under the maternal care, passed through a crisis which was forestalled, but which was terrible for so frail a constitution. Already dispirited by the fatigues of Jacques's long illness, the countess found herself without courage to support this fresh blow, and the spectacle presented by these two beloved beings rendered her insensible to the redoubled torments of her husband's temper. Thus the bitter waves of more and more distressful sand-laden storms were undermining the most deeply-rooted hopes of her heart. Besides, she had abandoned herself to the tyranny of the count, who, weary of war, had regained his lost ground.

"When my whole strength was gathered round my children," she wrote, "could I employ it against Monsieur de Mortsauf, and could I defend myself from his aggressions whilst fighting against death? Walking to-day, alone and enfeebled, between the two little mourners who accompany me, I am seized with an irrepressible disgust of life. What blow can I feel, to what affection can I respond, when I

see Jacques motionless upon the terrace, with no sign of life except in his two beautiful eyes, enlarged by emaciation, hollow as an old man's, and, fatal omen! whose precocious intelligence is in such contrast with his bodily weakness? When I see this pretty Madeleine beside me, so lively, so tender, so glowing, now as white as the dead, her very hair and eyes seem to me to have faded, she turns her drooping gaze upon me as if she were trying to bid me farewell; no dish tempts her, or, if she wants food, she frightens me with the strangeness of her fancies; the honest little thing, although reared in my bosom, blushes in confiding them to me. In spite of my efforts, I cannot amuse my children; each one smiles at me, but this smile is wrung from them by my blandishments, and is not spontaneous; they cry at not being able to return my caresses. Suffering has relaxed everything about them, even the ties which bind us. Thus you will understand how dreary it is at Clochegourde; Monsieur de Mortsauf reigns unchecked."

Oh! my friend, you, my pride!" she wrote further on, "you must indeed love to be able to love me still, to love me inert, thankless and petrified by misery!"

Just then, when I had never felt my pity more keenly moved, and when I only existed in this soul to whom I was trying to waft the clear breeze of the mornings in anticipation of the empurpled evenings, I met in the salons of the Élysée-Bourbon one of those illustrious ladies who are half sovereigns.

Immense riches, descent from a family which from the Conquest had been guiltless of any mésalliance, marriage with one of the most distinguished old men of the English peerage, all these advantages were but accessories which enhanced the beauty of her person, her charms, her manners, her intelligence, an indescribable brilliancy which dazzled before fascinating. She was the idol of the day, and she reigned all the better over Parisian society, in that she possessed the qualities necessary to success, the iron hand beneath a velvet glove spoken of by Bernadotte. You know the strange personality of the English, that proud impassable Strait, that chilly Saint-George's Channel which they put between themselves and the people who have not been introduced to them; humanity seems to be an ant-hill upon which they tread; of their kind they only know those whom they receive; as for the others, they do not even understand their language; there are indeed lips which move and eyes which see, but no sound or look affects them: for them, these people are as if they did not exist.

In this way the English are, as it were, an image of their island, where the law regulates everything, and where all is uniform in every sphere, and the exercise of virtue seems to be the unavoidable working of a machinery which moves at a given time. The polished steel fortifications erected round an Englishwoman, caged in her home by threads of gold, but in which her manger and her drinking-place, her perches and her pasture are marvels, lend her

irresistible attraction. Never has a nation better paved the way for the married woman's hypocrisy by placing her at every turn between death and the social life ; for her, there is no medium between shame and honor : the fault is either complete, or it is not ; it is all or nothing, the *to be, or not to be*, of Hamlet. This alternative, added to the constant scorn to which habit has accustomed her, makes the Englishwoman a distinct being in the world. She is a poor creature, virtuous by compulsion and ready to become depraved, condemned to perpetual falsehood buried deep in her heart, but delicious in method, because this nation reduces everything to method. Hence the beauties peculiar to the women of this country : this exaltation of an affection in which for them life is necessarily summed up, the exaggeration of their solicitude for themselves, the delicacy of their love so gracefully depicted in the famous scene from *Romeo and Juliet,* in which Shakespeare's genius has with one stroke described the Englishwoman. To you who envy them so many things, what can I tell you that you do not know about these fair sirens, apparently so inscrutable and so soon fathomed, who fancy that love is sufficient for love, and who infuse depression into pleasure by never varying it, whose mind has but one note, whose voice has but one syllable, an ocean of love in which whosoever has not swum will ever ignore something of the poetry of the senses, just as he who has never seen the sea will have so many strings the less to his lyre ? You know the reason

of these words. My intrigue with the Marquise Dudley was of fatal notoriety. At an age in which the senses exercise so much influence over our resolves, in a young man in whom their ardors had been so violently repressed, the image of the saint who was suffering her slow martyrdom at Clochegourde shone so brightly, that I was able to resist all seductions. This fidelity was the lustre which drew the Lady Arabella's attention to me. My resistance stimulated her passion. What she desired, as do a great many Englishwomen, was éclat, unconventionality. She wanted pepper, some pimento for the sustenance of the heart, in the same way as the English like fiery sauces to tickle their palates. The atony which is brought into the existence of these women by an invariable finality in things, and a methodical regularity in the habits, leads them to the worship of the romantic and impossible. I did not know how to judge this character. The more I retreated in cold disdain, the more Lady Dudley became enamored. This struggle in which she gloried, excited the curiosity of certain circles, it was her first happiness which made it a matter of pride to triumph. Ah! I should have been saved, had some friend repeated to me the atrocious remark she dropped about Madame de Mortsauf and myself:

"I am sick of these turtledove sighings!" she said.

Without wishing now to justify my guilt, I would remind you, Natalie, that a man possesses fewer resources for resisting a woman than you have for

evading our pursuit. Our manners forbid to our sex the brutalities of the repression which, with you, are attractions to a lover, and which, moreover, etiquette demands of you; amongst us, on the contrary, I know not what law of masculine fatuity ridicules our reserve; we leave the monopoly of modesty to you so that you may have the privilege of granting favors; but invert the rôles, and man succumbs beneath derision. Although guarded by my passion, I was not of an age that remains insensible to the triple allurements of pride, devotion and beauty. When Lady Arabella, in the midst of a ball of which she was the queen, laid the homage that she received at my feet, and when she watched for my look to know whether her toilette was to my liking, and thrilled with delight when she pleased me, I was moved by her emotion. Moreover, she stood upon ground where I could not escape her; it was difficult for me to refuse certain invitations issued by the diplomatic circle; all salons were open to her on account of her rank, and with that skill that women exert in order to obtain what they please, she made the mistress of the house put her next to me at table; then she would whisper in my ear.

"If I were loved as Madame de Mortsauf is," she would say to me, "I would give up everything for you."

She would laughingly submit the humblest conditions to me, she would promise me the most faithful secrecy, or would ask me to suffer her only to

love me. One day, she said these words which satisfied all the compromises between a scrupulous conscience and a youth's frantic desires:

"Your friend always, and your mistress whenever you wish!"

Finally, she contemplated making use of my very loyalty of character to effect my ruin, she bribed my valet, and, after a reception at which she had appeared so beautiful that she was sure of having excited my desires, I found her in my rooms.

This scandal made a great stir in England, and her aristocracy was as much dismayed as Heaven over the fall of its brightest angel. Lady Dudley quitted her cloud in the Britannic Empyrean, kept within her income, and, by her sacrifices, tried to eclipse *her* whose virtue had caused this memorable disaster. Lady Arabella delighted, like the demon from the pinnacle of the temple, in showing me the richest areas of her ardent kingdom.

Read this with indulgence, I implore you. This bears upon one of the most interesting problems of human life, a crisis to which most men have been subject, and which I should like to explain, were it only to throw light upon this danger. This beautiful lady, so slim, so frail, this milk-white woman, so languid, so delicate, so gentle, with such a tender face, crowned with fine, fawn-colored hair, this creature whose brilliancy seems phosphorescent and transient, is an organization of iron. However fiery it may be, no horse resists her nervous wrist, this apparently weak but tireless hand. She has the

foot of a roe, a small, hard, muscular foot, under an indescribably graceful exterior. She is so strong as as to have nothing to fear in any struggle; no man can overtake her on horseback; she would win a steeple-chase prize upon a centaur; she shoots deer and stags without stopping her horse. Her body knows no perspiration, it inhales the warmth in the atmosphere, and lives in the water for fear of dying. Her passion, too, is quite African; her desire speeds like the whirlwind in the desert, a desert whose burning space is portrayed in her eyes, a desert full of azure and love, with its unchanging sky, its cool, starlight nights. What a contrast to Clochegourde! The East and the West: the one draining the least particles of moisture to support herself; the other exuding her soul, enveloping her worshippers with a luminous atmosphere; the former, swift and lithe; the latter, slow and plump. Indeed, have you ever considered the general meaning of English morals? Is it not the deification of matter, a positive epicurism, systemized, and skilfully applied? Whatever she does or says, England is materialistic, perhaps unconsciously. She has religious and moral pretensions, in which the divine spirituality, the catholic spirit is missing, the life-giving grace of which can never be replaced by any hypocrisy, no matter how well simulated. She possesses in the highest degree that science of existence which improves the least particles of materialism, which makes your slippers the most exquisite slippers in the world, which gives an indescribable savor to your linen, which lines the

cupboards with cedar and perfume; pours out at a certain hour a fragrant tea, skilfully laid out, expels the dust, nails down the carpets from the first step to the furthest recesses of the house, brushes the walls of the cellars, polishes the door-knocker, eases the carriage springs, which makes of matter a nourishing, mealy pulp, conspicuous and clean, in the midst of which the soul dies of satiety, which produces the terrible monotony of well-being, furnishes an unthwarted existence, stripped of all spontaneity, and which, in a word, mechanizes one.

Thus, I suddenly became acquainted, in the very seat of this English luxury, with a woman, perhaps alone of her sex, who enveloped me with the snares of a love ever-rallying from its paroxysms and to the excesses of which I was bringing a rigid continence, a love which has overpowering attractions, a magnetism of its own, which often admits one into Heaven through the ivory doors of its semi-quiescence, or carries one away on its winged back. A horribly ungrateful love, which laughs over the corpses of those it has killed; a treacherous love, a cruel love which is like English policy, and in which almost all men perish. You already know the problem: Man is composed of matter and spirit: in him animalism culminates, and the angel begins. Hence this struggle that we all go through between a future destiny which we foresee and the memories of our anterior instincts from which we are not entirely weaned: a carnal love and a divine love. One man finds them in a single person, another

refrains ; this one searches the entire sex in pursuit of the gratification of his anterior appetites, that one idealizes it in one woman in whom the universe is embodied ; some hover undecided between the pleasures of matter and those of the spirit, others spiritualize the flesh whilst asking from it what it could never give. If, in considering these general features of love, you include the repulsions and affinities which result from the diversity of organizations, and which break the compacts entered into by those who have not tried each other ; if you add to them the errors caused by the expectations of people who exist more particularly by spirit, by heart or by action, who think, feel and act, and whose vocations are missed, and unappreciated in an association of two beings, both equally duplex : you will have great indulgence for the misfortunes for which society has no pity. Well, Lady Arabella contents the instincts, the organs, the appetites, the vices and virtues of the subtle matter of which we are made. She was mistress of the body. Madame de Mortsauf was spouse of the soul. Love that is satisfied by the mistress has limits, matter is finite, its properties are of calculable force, it is liable to inevitable saturation ; in Paris, beside Lady Dudley I often felt an indescribable void. The infinite is the heart's domain, love had no limits at Clochegourde. I loved Lady Arabella passionately, and certainly, if the animal within her was sublime, she also possessed superiority of intellect ; her satirical conversation embraced everything. But I adored Henriette. At

night, I wept from happiness; in the morning, I wept from remorse. There are certain women who are clever enough to hide their jealousy under the most angelic kindness; it is those, who, like Lady Dudley, are past their thirtieth year. These women then know how to feel and to calculate, how to extract all the substance from the present and to provide for the future; they can stifle what are often legitimate cries, with the spirit of the hunter who does not notice a wound while pursuing his impetuous halloo. Without mentioning Madame de Mortsauf, Arabella tried to destroy her in my heart, where she was always meeting with her, and her passion revived at the breath of this unconquerable love. In order to triumph by comparisons which should be to her own advantage, she showed neither suspicion, annoyance, nor curiosity, as do most young women; but, like the lioness which has seized upon its victim and brought it back to its lair to gnaw, she took care that nothing should disturb her happiness, and guarded me as an unsubdued conquest. I used to write to Henriette beneath her very eyes, she never read a single line, and never tried in any way to find out the address on the letters. I was free. She seemed to have said to herself: "If I lose him, I shall only have myself to blame." And she proudly relied upon so devoted a love, that she would unhesitatingly have given me her life had I demanded it. In fact she made me believe that, did I leave her, she would kill herself immediately. You should have heard her, on this subject, extolling the

custom of the Indian widows who burn themselves on the funeral-pile of their husbands.

"Although, in India, this practice is a distinction reserved for the higher classes, and that, in this respect, it is but little understood by Europeans, who are incapable of divining the haughty grandeur of this privilege, you must confess," she said to me, "that, with our empty modern morality, the aristocracy can never retrieve itself save by extravagance of sentiment. How am I to teach the bourgeois that the blood in my veins is not the same as theirs, if not by dying differently than they do? Women of inferior birth can have the diamonds, the stuffs, the horses, the very escutcheons which should be secured to us, for a name can be bought! But to love, with uplifted head, in defiance of the law, to die for the idol that one has chosen for one's self while cutting out a shroud from the sheets of one's bed, to subordinate Heaven and earth to a man by thus robbing the Almighty of the right to make a god, never to fail him in anything, not even for the sake of virtue; for would not refusing one's self to him in the name of duty, mean giving one's self to something which is not *him?*—whether it be a man or an idea, it is always treason! These are the heights to which ordinary women never attain; they only know two familiar ways: either the highway of virtue, or the miry lane of the courtesan!"

She argued, you see, from pride, she flattered all the vanities by deifying them, she set me so high, that she could only live at my knees; indeed, all

the seductions of her spirit were shown in her slave-like attitude and her complete submission. She could remain a whole day, stretched out at my feet, silent, absorbed in looking at me, watching for the hour of pleasure like a sultana of a seraglio, and hastening it by skilful coquetry, while seeming to await it. How describe the first six months during which I was given up to the enervating sensualities of a love that was fraught with pleasures, and that varied them with the skill acquired by experience, but all in hiding its tuition under the transports of passion? These pleasures, unexpected revelation of the poetry of the senses, constitute the strong link by which young men bind themselves to women older than themselves; but this link is the convict's circlet, it leaves an ineffaceable imprint upon the soul, it gives it an untimely distaste for sweet, innocent love, rich in blossoms alone, and which knows not how to serve alcohol in golden cups, curiously wrought, enriched with gems gleaming with unquenchable fire. While tasting the pleasures that I had dreamed of without knowing them, that I had expressed in my votive bouquets, and which are intensified a thousand times by the union of the souls, I was not destitute of paradoxes whereby to justify to myself the complaisance with which I was drinking from this beautiful chalice. Often when, lost in the infinitude of exhaustion, my liberated soul was hovering far above earth, I used to think that these pleasures were a means of annulling matter and restoring the soul to its sublime flight. Lady Dudley, like a great many women,

would often profit by the exaltation with which the excess of happiness is attended, to bind me by oaths; and, under the stimulus of desire, she would wring from me blasphemies against the angel of Clochegourde. Once false, I became deceitful. I continued writing to Madame de Mortsauf as if I were still the same boy in the little shabby blue coat she loved so much; but, I admit, her gift of second sight horrified me when I thought of the disasters that one indiscretion might cause in the fine castle of my hopes. Often, in the midst of my delights, a sudden pang would chill me, and I would hear the name of Henriette uttered by a voice from on high like the *Cain, where is Abel?* of the Scriptures.

My letters remained unanswered. I was seized with an awful anxiety. I wanted to start for Clochegourde. Arabella did not oppose it in any way, but spoke naturally of accompanying me to Touraine. Her caprice stimulated by difficulty, her presentiments justified by an unlooked for happiness, had all inspired her with a genuine love which she wished to make unique. Her feminine genius revealed to her in this journey a means of detaching me entirely from Madame de Mortsauf; whilst I, blinded by terror, and carried away by the simplicity of real passion, never saw the trap in which I was to be caught.

*

Lady Dudley proposed the most humble concessions, and forestalled all objections. She consented to live near Tours, in the country, unknown, disguised, without going out by day, and appointing our rendezvous at night when nobody could come upon us. I left Tours on horseback for Clochegourde. I had my reasons for going in this way, for I needed a horse for my nocturnal excursions, and mine was an Arab that Lady Esther Stanhope had sent to the marchioness, and which she had exchanged for that famous Rembrandt picture that she has in her salon in London, which I obtained so strangely. I took the road which I had traversed on foot six years before, and stopped under the walnut-tree. From there, I saw Madame de Mortsauf in a white dress on the edge of the terrace. I immediately rushed toward her with the rapidity of lightning, and in a few minutes was at the base of the wall, after having cleared the distance in a straight line, as if it were a steeple-chase. She heard the mighty bounds of the swallow of the desert, and, when I stopped short at the corner of the terrace, she said :

"Ah! there you are!"

I was thunderstruck by these few words. She knew of my intrigue. Who could have told her? Her mother, whose odious letter she showed me later on! The apathetic faintness of the voice, formerly so full of life, the leaden dullness of the tone, betrayed an indelible sorrow, exhaled by an indescribable odor of flowers irretrievably cut. The hurricane of infidelity, like those risings of the Loire which choke up the soil for ever, had swept over her soul, laying waste the rich green meadows. I led my horse through the little door; he lay down upon the turf at my bidding, and the countess, who had slowly approached, cried:

"The beautiful animal!"

She was holding her arms folded so that I should not take her hand, I divined her meaning.

"I will go and tell Monsieur de Mortsauf," she said, leaving me.

I stood there, aghast, letting her go, gazing at her, still noble, calm and proud, fairer than I had ever seen her, but with the stamp of the bitterest melancholy imprinted upon her forehead, and hanging her head like a lily weighed down by the rain.

"Henriette!" I cried, with the desperation of a man who feels he is dying.

She did not turn round at all, she never stopped, she disdained to tell me she had withdrawn her name from me, that she would answer to it no more, she still walked on. In this dreadful valley which must contain millions of people returned to dust, and

whose essence now quickens the surface of the globe, I might feel insignificant in the midst of this multitude crowded beneath the luminous immensities which would illuminate them by their glory; but even then I should be less humiliated than I was before this white form, rising like some inflexible flood in a town, ascending with equal steps to the château of Clochegourde, the crown and the torture of this Christian Dido! I cursed Arabella with one imprecation that would have killed her had she heard it, she who had forsaken all for me, just as one forsakes all for God! I stood lost in a world of thought, seeing nothing on all sides but the infinity of sorrow. Then I saw them all coming down. Jacques was running with the naïve impetuosity of his age. Madeleine, the gazelle with the dying eyes, accompanied her mother. I held Jacques tight to my heart, shedding over him the effusion of the soul and the tears that his mother rejected.

Monsieur de Mortsauf came to me, opened his arms, clasped me to him, kissed me on the cheeks, and said:

"Félix, I have learned that I owed my life to you!"

Madame de Mortsauf turned her back upon us during this scene, seizing the excuse of showing the horse to the astonished Madeleine.

"Ah! the devil! how like women!" cried the count angrily, "they examine your horse."

Madeleine turned round, came to me, and I kissed her hand, looking at the countess, who blushed.

"Madeleine is much better," I said.

"Poor little girl!" replied the countess, kissing her forehead.

"Yes, for the moment they are all well," replied the count. "I alone, my dear Félix, am as shattered as an old, tottering tower."

"It seems that the general still has his *dragons noirs?*" I rejoined, looking at Madame de Mortsauf.

"We all have our *blue devils,*" she replied, "is not that the English term?"

We went up toward the vineyards, all walking together, and feeling that some grave event had taken place. She had no desire to be alone with me. In fact, I was her guest.

"What about your horse?" said the count as we emerged.

"You see," rejoined the countess, "that I was wrong in thinking about it and am wrong in not thinking about it."

"Why, yes," he said, "everything should be done at the proper time."

"I will go," I said, finding this cold reception unbearable, "I alone can make him move, and arrange him properly. My groom is coming by the Chinon omnibus, he will rub him down."

"Does the groom also come from England?" she said.

"He gets everything from there," replied the count, whose spirits rose at seeing his wife sad.

The coldness of his wife was an opportunity for opposing her, and he overwhelmed me with his

friendliness. I learned the burdensomeness of a husband's attachment. Do not imagine that as soon as their attentions weary superior minds that their wives are then lavish with an affection which seems to have been usurped; no! they are odious and insupportable from the day that love vanishes. Sympathy, an essential condition of such association, then appears to be but a means; it weighs, and is hateful as are all means which are not justified by the end.

"My dear Félix," said the count, taking my hands and squeezing them affectionately, "forgive Madame de Mortsauf: women are bound to be pettish, their weakness excuses them, they cannot possibly acquire the equality of temper which gives us our force of character. She is very fond of you I know; but—"

Whilst the count was talking, Madame de Mortsauf gradually moved away from us so as to leave us alone.

"Félix," he then said to me, gazing after his wife, who was going back to the château with her two children, "I do not know what is going on in Madame de Mortsauf's mind, but her character has completely changed in the last six weeks. She, hitherto so gentle, so devoted, has become incredibly disagreeable."

Manette told me, later on, that the countess had fallen into a state of dejection which rendered her insensible to the count's bickerings. No longer encountering sensitive soil in which to thrust his darts,

this man had grown anxious, like the child who sees no sign of life in the poor insect it is tormenting. Just now, he had need of a confidant, just as an executioner requires assistance.

"Try," he said, after a pause, "to question Madame de Mortsauf. A wife always keeps some secrets from her husband; but perhaps she will confide the subject of her troubles to you. Were it to cost me half my remaining days and half my fortune, I would sacrifice everything to make her happy. She is so necessary to my life! If, in my old age, I did not know that I always had this angel beside me, I should be the most miserable of men! I should like to die happy. So tell her that she will not have to suffer me long. I, Félix, my poor friend, I am going I know. I hide the fatal truth from everybody, why distress them beforehand? It is always the pylorus, my friend! At last I have found out the causes of the malady, sensitiveness is killing me. Indeed, all our affections affect the gastric center—"

"So that," I said, smiling, "susceptible people perish through the stomach."

"Don't laugh, Félix, nothing is more true. Too keen a suffering exaggerates the play of the great sympathetic. This over-excitement of the feelings keeps the mucous membrane of the stomach in a constant state of irritation. If this condition persists, it causes at first imperceptible disturbances in the digestive functions: the secretions change, the appetite becomes vitiated and the digestion becomes

irregular; very soon, sharp pains appear, increase, and day by day become more frequent; then the disorder reaches its height, as if some slow poison were being mingled with the alimentary bolus; the mucus thickens, the induration of the valve of the pylorus is effected and there is formed a scirrhus which must kill one. Well, I have come to that, my dear fellow! The induration progresses without anything being able to stop it. Look at my straw-colored complexion, my dry, burning eyes, my extreme emaciation! I am withering up. What can you expect! I brought back the germ of this malady from the emigration: I suffered so much at that time! My marriage, which might have repaired the evils of the emigration, far from soothing my ulcerated spirit, only reopened the wound. What have I met with here? Eternal alarms caused by my children, domestic troubles, a fortune to re-establish, economies which entailed a thousand privations that I had to impose upon my wife and which I was the first to suffer from. Finally, I can only confide this secret to you, but this is my greatest affliction: although Blanche may be an angel, she does not understand me; she knows nothing of my pains, she provokes them; I forgive her! Listen, this is an awful thing to say, my dear boy, but a less virtuous woman than she would have made me happier by lending herself to consolations that Blanche cannot even imagine, for she is as innocent as a child! Added to that my servants pester me, they are blockheads who hear Greek when I talk French. At the time when our

fortune was fairly reconstructed, when I had fewer worries, the harm was done, I was attaining the period of vitiated appetites; then came my great illness, so badly managed by Origet. In short, now, I have not six months to live—"

I was listening to the count with terror. Upon seeing the countess again, I had been struck with her dry eyes and sallow complexion; I dragged the count toward the house whilst appearing to listen to his complaints interlarded with medical dissertations, but I was thinking only of Henriette and wanted to observe her. I found the countess in the salon, where she was attending a mathematical lesson given by the Abbé de Dominis to Jacques, while showing Madeleine a tapestry stitch. Formerly, she would easily have contrived, on the day of my arrival, to put off her occupations so as to devote herself to me entirely; but my love was so intensely real, that I forced back into my heart the grief I felt at the contrast between the present and the past; for I remarked the fatal yellowish tinge which, upon this heavenly face, resembled the reflection of the divine gleam that the Italian painters gave to the faces of the saints. And then I felt within me the icy breath of death. Then, when the fire of her eyes, devoid of the limpid moisture in which her glance had once swam, was turned upon me, I shivered; then I noticed several alterations due to sorrow which I had not remarked at all in the open air: tiny lines which, at my last visit, were but lightly imprinted upon her brow, now indented it; her bluish

temples seemed to be hot and sunken; her eyes were hollow under their relaxed arches, and the throat had darkened; she was blighted like fruit upon which the bruises are beginning to show, and that an inward worm has prematurely tinged. I, whose whole ambition was to flood her soul with happiness, had I not infused bitterness into the source at which she renewed her life, and fortified her courage? I came and sat down beside her, and said to her in a voice full of yearning contrition:

"Are you satisfied about your health?"

"Yes," she replied, piercing me with her eyes. "My health is there," she continued, pointing to Jacques and Madeleine.

Having issued triumphantly from her struggle with nature, Madeleine, at fifteen, was a woman; she had grown, her Bengal rose color had revived in her tanned cheeks; she had lost the childish unconcern which looks everything in the face, and was beginning to cast down her eyes; her movements were becoming as rare and sedate as her mother's; her figure was slim, and the graces of her bust were already blooming; coquetry was already smoothing her magnificent black hair, parted in two bands over her Spanish brow. She was like those pretty statuettes of the Middle Ages, so delicate in outline, so slender of form, that the eye fears to see them break under its caress; but health, the eventual outcome of so many efforts, had covered her cheeks with a peachy velvet, and the line of her neck with the silky down whereon, as in her mother's case the light shimmered.

She was to live! God had written it, dear bud of the most beautiful of human flowers, upon the long lashes of your lids, upon the curve of your shoulders, which promised as rich a development as those of your mother! This dusky young girl, of poplar-like height, was a contrast to Jacques, a fragile youth of seventeen, whose head was enlarged, whose sudden expansion of brow was alarming, and whose feverish, tired eyes were in keeping with a deep sonorous voice. The organ gave forth too full a volume of sound, just as the glance disclosed too many thoughts. It was the intellect, the soul, and the heart of Henriette devouring a feeble body in their rapid flame; for Jacques had that milky complexion flushed with the burning colors which characterize young English girls who are marked by the flail to be cut down at an appointed time; delusive health! In obedience to the sign with which Henriette, after having pointed to Madeleine, indicated Jacques who was chalking geometrical figures and algebraical calculations upon a blackboard before the Abbé de Dominis, I started at the sight of death beneath the flowers, and reverenced the poor mother's illusion.

"When I see them like this, joy hushes my sorrows, just as they are hushed and disappear when I see them ill. My friend," she said, her eyes glistening with maternal delight, "if other affections fail us, the feelings here requited, the duties fulfilled and crowned with success, compensate for the defeat encountered elsewhere. Jacques, like you, will be

a highly educated man, full of virtuous knowledge; like you, he will be an honor to his country, which perhaps he will govern, helped by you who will be occupying so exalted a position; but I shall strive to make him faithful to his early affections. Madeleine, the dear creature, already has a sublime heart, she is as pure as the snow on the highest peak of the Alps, she will have the devotion of woman and her gracious intellect, she is proud, she will be worthy of the De Lenoncourts! The once tortured mother is now very happy, happy with an infinite, unmixed happiness; yes, my life is full and rich. You see, God multiplies my joys in the midst of lawful affections and mingles bitterness with those to which a dangerous inclination was hurrying me."

"Good!" cried the abbé joyfully, "Monsieur le Vicomte knows as much as I do."

At the end of his demonstration, Jacques coughed slightly.

"Enough for to-day, my dear abbé," said the anxious countess, "and above all, no chemistry lesson.—Go for a ride, Jacques," she continued, submitting to her son's embrace with the fond but dignified delight of a mother, and her eyes turned upon me as if to challenge my memory. "Go, dear, and be careful."

"But," I said, while she was following Jacques with a lingering look, "you have not answered me. Do you feel any pain?"

"Yes, sometimes in the stomach. If I were in

Paris, I should enjoy all the honors of gastritis, the fashionable complaint."

"Mother is often in great pain," said Madeleine.

"Ah!" she said, "does my health interest you—?"

Madeleine, astonished at the profound irony which marked these words, looked at us in turn; with my eyes I was counting the pink flowers on the cushions of her gray and green suite with which the salon was furnished.

"This situation is intolerable," I whispered.

"Was it I who created it?" she asked. "My dear child," she added aloud, assuming that cruel playfulness with which women clothe their revenge, "are you ignorant of modern history? have not France and England always been enemies? Madeleine knows that, she knows that they are separated by a vast sea, a cold, stormy sea."

The vases on the chimney-piece had been replaced by candelabra, no doubt in order to deprive me of the pleasure of filling them with flowers; I found them later on in her room. When my servant arrived, I went out to give him his orders; he had brought me several things which I wanted to put in my room.

"Félix," said the countess, "don't make a mistake! My aunt's old room now belongs to Madeleine, you are over the count."

Although guilty, I had a heart, and all these words were stabs coolly inflicted in the most sensitive spots which she seemed to pick out to strike. Moral suf-

ferings are relative, they are in proportion to the delicacy of the mind, and the countess had unrelentingly rung the changes on this scale of pain; but, for this very reason, the best woman will be so much the more cruel as she has been kind; I looked at her, but she bent her head. I went to my new room, which was pretty, white and green. There, I burst into tears. Henriette heard me, she came bringing a bouquet of flowers.

"Henriette," I said, "has it come to this that you will not forgive the most excusable of faults?"

"Never call me Henriette again," she replied, "she no longer exists, poor woman; but you will always find Madame de Mortsauf a devoted friend who will listen to you, and love you. Félix, we will talk later on. If you still have any feeling for me, you will let me grow accustomed to seeing you; and, when words torture my heart less, when I have recovered a little courage, well then, then only—Look at this valley," she said, pointing to the Indre, "it hurts me, I love it all the same."

"Ah! a curse on England and all her women! I shall send in my resignation to the king, I will die here, forgiven."

"No, love her, this woman! Henriette is no more, I do not jest, this you must know."

She withdrew, revealing the extent of her wounds in the accent of this last remark. I went out quickly, held her back and said:

"Then you do not love me any more?"

"You have done me more harm than all the others

put together. Now, I suffer less, so I love you less; but it is only in England that they say: There is no *never*, and no *forever*! here, we say: *forever!* Be kind, do not increase my pain; and, if you suffer, remember that I exist!"

She drew away her hand, which I was holding, cold, lifeless but damp, and flew like an arrow down the corridor in which this truly tragic scene had taken place. During dinner, the count had a punishment in store for me that I had not dreamed of.

"Then the Marquise Dudley is not in Paris?" he said.

I became exceedingly red whilst replying:

"No."

"She is not at Tours?" continued the count.

"She is not divorced, she may go to England. Her husband would be very pleased if she would return to him," I said hastily.

"Has she any children?" asked Madame de Mortsauf, in altered tones.

"Two sons," I said.

"Where are they?"

"In England, with the father."

"Come, Félix, be frank.—Is she as beautiful as they say?"

"How can you ask him such a question! Is not the woman one loves always the most beautiful of women?" cried the countess.

"Yes, always," I said proudly, darting a look at her which she could not bear.

"You are lucky," resumed the count, "yes, you

are a lucky rogue. Ah! in my youth I should have been crazy over such a conquest—"

"That will do," said Madame de Mortsauf, drawing her husband's attention to Madeleine with a look.

"I am not a child," said the count, who delighted in going back to his youth. Upon leaving the table, the countess took me out on the terrace, and, when we got there, she cried:

"What! there are women who sacrifice their children for a man? Wealth, the world, I can conceive of, eternity, yes, perhaps! But children! to debar one's self from one's children!"

"Yes, and these women would like to have still more to sacrifice, they give all—"

To the countess, the world was overturned, her ideas became confused. Overwhelmed by this grandeur, suspecting that the happiness might justify this immolation, hearing within herself the cries of the rebellious flesh, she stood aghast in the presence of her wasted life. Yes, she had a moment of horrible doubt; but she recovered herself, noble and saintly, carrying her head high.

"Then love her well, Félix, this woman," she said, with tears in her eyes, "she shall be my more fortunate sister. I will forgive her the wrong she has done me, if she gives you what you never ought to find here, and what you can no longer expect from me. You were right, I have never told you that I loved you, and I have never loved as people love in this world. But, if she is not a mother, how can she love?"

"Dear angel," I replied, "I should have to be far less moved than I am to explain to you that you soar victoriously above her, that she is a woman of the earth, a daughter of the fallen race, and that you are a daughter of the skies, an adored angel, that you have my whole heart and that she has nothing but my body; she knows it, she is in despair about it, and she would change with you, even if the most cruel martyrdom were inflicted upon her as the price of this change. But it is all irretrievable. To you belong the soul, the thoughts, the pure love, to you youth and old age; to her the desires and pleasures of fleeting passion; to you my memory in its fullest capacity, to her the most profound oblivion!"

"Speak, speak, oh! tell me that, my friend!"

She sat down on a bench and burst into tears.

"Then, Félix, purity of life and maternal love, are not mistakes! Oh! spread this balm upon my wounds! Say once more the words which carry me back to those skies where I longed to take an equal flight with you! Bless me with one look, one sacred word, and I will forgive you all the ills that I have suffered these last two months."

"Henriette, there are mysteries in our life that you know nothing about. I met you at an age at which sentiment can stifle the desires inspired by our nature; but two or three scenes, the memory of which will stir in the very hour of death, must have shown you that this age was ending, and your constant triumph has been to prolong its mute de-

lights. A love without possession maintains itself on the very aggravation of the desires; then there comes a moment when all is suffering within us, who resemble you in nothing. We possess a power which could not be resigned, at the risk of forfeiting our manhood. Deprived of the food which it needs, the heart consumes itself, and feels an exhaustion which is not death, but which precedes it. Hence nature cannot long be imposed upon; at the least accident, she awakes with a force that is like madness. No, I have not loved, but I was thirsty in the midst of the desert."

"Of the desert!" she said bitterly, pointing to the valley. "And," she added, "how he reasons, and what subtle distinctions! Believers have not so much ingenuity."

"Henriette," I said, "do not let us quarrel for a few chance expressions. No, my soul has not wavered, but I was not master of my senses. This woman is aware that you are the one beloved. She plays a secondary rôle in my life, she knows it, and submits to it; I have the right to leave her, as one leaves a courtesan—"

"And then?"

"She has told me that she will kill herself," I replied, thinking that this resolution would surprise Henriette. But, upon hearing me, she broke into one of those scornful smiles which are far more expressive than the thoughts they interpret.

"My dear heart," I continued, "if you take into consideration my resistance and the seductions

which plotted my downfall, you will understand this fatal—"

"Oh! yes, fatal!" she said, "I had too much faith in you! I thought that you would never fail in the virtue practised by the priest and—which Monsieur de Mortsauf possesses," she added, infusing the sarcasm of epigram into her voice.—"All is over," she resumed after a pause, "I owe you a great deal, my friend: you have extinguished the flames of material life within me. The hardest part of the way is done, age is creeping on, I am now ailing, and shall soon be infirm; I could never be the brilliant fairy who rains her favors upon you. Be faithful to Lady Arabella. Madeleine, whom I was bringing up so nicely for you, to whom will she belong? Poor Madeleine! poor Madeleine!" she repeated like a mournful refrain, "if you had heard her saying to me: 'Mother, you are not kind to Félix!' the dear creature!"

She looked at me under the warm rays of the setting sun which were glancing through the leaves, and, seized by I know not what compassion for our wreck, she looked back into our unsullied past, by giving way to retrospections that were mutual. We revived our memories, our eyes went from the valley to the vineyard, from the windows of Clochegourde to Frapesle, whilst peopling this reverie with our scented bouquets, the creations of our desires. It was her last pleasure, enjoyed with the sincerity of the Christian spirit. This scene, so pregnant for us, had plunged us into the same melancholy. She

believed my words, and saw herself where I set her, in the heavens.

"My friend," she said, "I obey God, for His finger is in all this."

It was not until later that I recognized the discernment of these words.

We slowly reascended the terraces. She took my arm, and leaned upon it, resigned and bleeding, but with a salve upon her wounds.

"Such is human life," she said. "What has Monsieur de Mortsauf done to deserve his fate? This proves to us the existence of a better world. Woe to those who should complain of having walked in the right way!"

Then she set herself to make so just an estimation of life, to consider it so deeply in its different aspects, that these cool calculations revealed to me the disgust that had seized her for all things here below. Upon reaching the porch, she dropped my arm, and spoke these concluding words:

"If God has given us the sensation and love of happiness, ought He not to take care of those innocent souls who have known nothing but affliction here below? It must be so, or God is not, else our life would be a bitter mockery."

At these last words, she hastily went in, and I found her on her couch, lying as if she had been crushed by the voice which felled Saint Paul.

"What is the matter?" I said.

"I know no more what virtue is," she said, "and am not conscious of my own!"

We were both petrified, listening to the sound of this speech as if it were a stone thrown into an abyss.

"If my life has been a mistake, *she* is right, *she!*" continued Madame de Mortsauf.

Thus her final struggle followed her final pleasure. When the count came, she said she felt ill, she who never complained; I implored her to specify her sufferings, but she refused to give any explanation, and went to bed, leaving me a prey to pangs of remorse which emanated from one another. Madeleine accompanied her mother; and the next day, I learned from her that the countess had been taken with vomiting, caused, she said, by the violent emotions of this day. Thus I, who longed to give my life for her, I was killing her.

"Dear count," I said to Monsieur de Mortsauf, who forced me to play backgammon, "I think the countess is very seriously ill; there is still time to save her: Call in Origet, and beg her to follow his advice—"

"Origet, who killed me?" he said, interrupting me. "No, no, I shall consult Carbonneau."

All this week, and especially the first few days, I endured agony, the beginning of paralysis of the affections, torture to vanity, torture to the soul. One must have been the centre of everything, of looks and sighs, have been the element of life, the focus from which each drew light, to understand the horror of the blank. The same things were there, but the spirit which vivified them was as dead as an extinguished flame. I realized the awful necessity there is for lovers never to meet again when love has flown. To be of no more importance, where one has reigned! to find the silent chill of death there where the joyous rays of life had sparkled! the contrast is overwhelming. Very soon I came to regret the painful ignorance of all happiness which had darkened my youth. Indeed my despair became so deep that I think the countess was touched. One day, after dinner, whilst we were all walking along the banks of the river, I made a final effort to obtain her pardon. I begged Jacques to take his sister on in front, I left the count to walk alone, and, leading Madame de Mortsauf toward the ferry-boat:

"Henriette," I said, "one word, for pity's sake, or I shall throw myself into the Indre! I have erred,

it is true; but do I not imitate the dog in his sublime attachment! like him I come back, like him full of shame; if he does wrong, he is punished, but he adores the hand which strikes him; crush me, but give me back your heart—"

"Poor child!" she said, "are you not always my son?"

She took my arm and silently overtook Jacques and Madeleine, with whom she returned to Clochegourde through the vineyard, leaving me to the count, who began to talk politics apropos of his neighbors.

"Let us go in," I said, "your head is bare, and the evening dew might do some harm."

"You pity me, you do, my dear Félix!" he replied, mistaking my motive, "my wife has never tried to console me, from system perhaps."

Once she never would have left me alone with her husband; now, I had to seek excuses to rejoin her. She was with her children, busy explaining the rules of backgammon to Jacques.

"There," said the count, always jealous of the affection that she bore her two children, "there are those for whom I am always neglected. Husbands, my dear Félix, always get the worst of it; the most virtuous of wives always seeks means of satisfying her need, of frustrating conjugal affection."

She continued her caresses without replying.

"Jacques," he said, "come here!"

Jacques made some demur.

"Your father wants you, go, my son," said the

mother, giving him a push.

"They love me to order," continued the old man, who sometimes perceived his position.

"Monsieur," she replied, passing her hand several times over Madeleine's hair which was dressed *en belle Ferronnière*, "do not be unjust to the poor women; life is not always easy for them to bear, and it may be that children are a mother's virtue."

"My dear," replied the count, who plumed himself on being logical, "what you say signifies that, without their children, women would fail in virtue and leave their husbands in the lurch."

The countess hastily rose and took Madeleine out on the porch.

"This is matrimony, my dear," said the count. "Do you mean to infer by your going out like this that I am talking nonsense?" he cried, taking his son by the hand and going out on the porch beside his wife, at whom he glared furiously.

"On the contrary, monsieur, you frightened me. Your reflection caused me a frightful pang," she said in a hollow voice, giving me a guilty look, "if virtue does not consist in sacrificing one's self for one's children and one's husband, what then is virtue?"

"To sa–cri–fice one's self!" retorted the count, wrenching his victim's heart with each syllable. "Whatever do you sacrifice to your children? whatever do you sacrifice to me? who? what? Answer! Will you answer me? What is going on here? What do you mean?"

"Monsieur," she replied, "would you be content with being loved for the love of God, or with knowing your wife to be virtuous for the sake of virtue itself?"

"Madame is right," I said, speaking in a quivering voice that vibrated in these two hearts, and in which breathed my eternally ruined hopes but which I composed by the expression of the intensest of all sorrows, the dull cry of which put an end to this quarrel, just as, when the lion roars, all is hushed.

"Yes, the greatest privilege that reason has conferred upon us is that of being able to attribute our virtues to the beings whose happiness is our own handiwork, and whom we make happy neither through selfish motives nor duty, but through an inexhaustible and ungrudging affection."

A tear glistened in Henriette's eyes.

"And, dear Count, if by chance a woman were involuntarily subjected to some feeling alien to those society imposes upon her, you must admit that the more irresistible the feeling, the more virtuous she is in stifling it, in *sacrificing* herself to her children and to her husband. This theory, however, is neither applicable to me, who unfortunately present an example of the contrary, nor to you whom it will never concern."

A moist and burning hand was laid upon my hand and pressed it silently.

"You have a fine heart, Félix," said the count, who not ungracefully passed his arm round his wife's waist and drew her gently toward him to

say: "My dear, forgive a poor invalid who no doubt wishes to be loved more than he deserves."

"There are hearts which are all generosity," she replied, leaning her head on the shoulder of the count, who took these words to himself.

This mistake gave the countess I know not what shock; her comb fell out, her hair became undone, she turned pale; her husband, who was supporting her, uttered a kind of roar as he felt her swooning, picked her up as if she were his daughter and carried her to the salon sofa, where we all surrounded her. Henriette kept my hand in hers, as if to tell me that we alone knew the secret of this scene, seemingly so simple, but so appalling on account of her anguish of mind.

"I am wrong," she said in a low voice when the count had left us alone for a moment to go and ask for a glass of orange-flower water. "I have been more than wrong toward you, whom I have tried to discourage when I ought to have welcomed you freely. Dear, yours is an adorable goodness that I alone can appreciate. Yes, I know, there are acts of kindness which are inspired by passion. Men have various ways of being kind: they are kind through indifference, through impulse, through calculation, through indolence of character; but you, my friend, you have just shown absolute kindness."

"If so," I said, "you must know that all that I may have of nobleness in me comes from you. Surely you remember that I am your work?"

"These words are enough for a woman's happiness," she replied, just as the count returned.—"I am better," she said, getting up, "I must have air."

We all went down to the terrace, sweet with the smell of the acacias which were still flowering. She had taken my right arm and was pressing it against her heart as if to convey sad thoughts; but according to her own expression, it was a sadness that she liked. No doubt she would have liked to be alone with me; but her imagination, unskilled in womanly artifice, suggested no means of sending away her children and her husband; so we talked on indifferent matters, whilst she was racking her brains to contrive a moment in which she might at last unburden her heart to mine. "It is a very long time since I went for a drive," she finally said, seeing the beauty of the evening, "Monsieur, please give the orders so that I may go for a turn."

She knew that before prayer-time any explanation would be impossible, and she was afraid lest the count should want to play backgammon. She might indeed meet me on this warm, scented terrace, when her husband had gone to bed; but perhaps she feared to remain beneath these shadows traversed by the voluptuous gleams, to walk along the balustrade whence our eyes could embrace the whole course of the Indre through the meadow. Just as a darkly-vaulted, silent cathedral invokes prayer, so does moonlit foliage, perfumed with penetrating fragrance and quickened by the indistinct sounds of

spring, stir the heartstrings and weaken the will. The country, which calms the passions of old men, excites those of youthful hearts; we knew it! Two strokes of a bell announced the hour of prayer, the countess winced.

"My dear Henriette, what is the matter?"

"Henriette exists no more," she replied, "do not bring her to life again, she was exacting, capricious; now you have a peaceful friend whose virtue has just been strengthened by the words that Heaven dictated to you. We will talk about all this later on. Let us be punctual at prayers. To-day, it is my turn to say them."

When the countess pronounced the words with which she asked for God's succor against the adversities of life, she clothed them with an accent which did not strike me alone; she seemed to have availed herself of her gift of second sight to foresee the terrible emotion by which she was to be overcome at a blunder caused by my forgetfulness of my agreement with Arabella.

"We have time to play three rubbers before the horses are harnessed," said the count, dragging me off to the salon. "You shall go driving with my wife; as for me, I shall go to bed."

Like all our games, this one was stormy. From her own room, or Madeleine's, the countess could hear her husband's voice.

"You take a strange advantage of hospitality," she said to the count when she returned to the salon.

I looked at her with a stupefied stare, I could not grow used to her harshness; in former days she would certainly have carefully abstained from screening me from the count's tyranny: in days gone by, she loved to see me sharing her sufferings and enduring them patiently for love of her.

"I would give my life," I whispered in her ear, "to hear you once more murmuring: *Poor dear! poor dear!*"

She cast down her eyes at the recollection of the hour to which I alluded; her glance crept toward me, but furtively, and it expressed the joy of the woman who sees the most fleeting utterances of her heart preferred to the deep delights of another love. Then, just as at every other time when I endured any similar wrong, I forgave her upon feeling myself understood. The count was losing, he said he was tired so as to be able to forsake the game, and we went to stroll round the lawn until the carriage should be ready; the moment he had left us, joy beamed so brightly upon my face, that the countess gave me a look of inquiry and astonishment.

"Henriette does exist," I said, "I am still loved; you wound me with the evident intention of breaking my heart; I may yet be happy!"

"But a shred of the woman remained," she said with terror, "and you are removing it at this very moment. Thank God! for He gives me courage to endure my just martyrdom. Yes, I still love you too well, I was about to fall, the Englishwoman shows me an abyss."

Just then, we got into the carriage, and the coachman asked for orders.

"Go the way of Chinon through the avenue, you will bring us back by the moors of Charlemagne and the road to Saché."

"What day is it?" I said over-eagerly.

"Saturday."

"Then do not go by there, madame; Saturday nights, the road is full of poulterers going to Tours, and we should meet their carts."

"Do as I tell you," she rejoined, looking at the coachman.

We were too familiar with the intonations of each other's voice, however infinite they might be, to be able to disguise the slightest emotion from each other. Henriette had understood all.

"You did not think of the poulterers in selecting this night," she said with a slight tinge of irony. "Lady Dudley is in Tours. Do not lie, she is waiting for you near here. *What day is it? the poulterers! the carts!*" she went on. "Did you ever make such observations when we went out before?"

"They prove that I forget everything at Clochegourde," I replied simply.

"She is expecting you?" she continued.

"Yes."

"At what time?"

"Between eleven and midnight."

"Where?"

"On the moors."

"Do not deceive me, is it not beneath the walnut-tree?"

"On the moors."

"We will go," she said, "I will see her."

Upon hearing these words, I looked upon my life as being definitely arrested. In a moment I resolved to put an end by a complete marriage with Lady Dudley, to the painful struggle which was threatening to exhaust my sensibility, and to destroy by so many repeated shocks those voluptuous refinements which are like fruit-blossoms. My savage silence hurt the countess, whose whole grandeur I did not yet understand.

"Do not be angry with me," she said in her golden voice, "this, dear, is my punishment. You will never be loved as you are here," she continued, putting her hand to her heart. "Have I not told you? The Marquise Dudley has saved me. For her the pollution, I do not envy her at all. For me the glorious love of the angels! I have traversed vast regions since your arrival. I have solved life. Exalt the soul, and you torture it; the higher you go, the less sympathy you meet with; instead of suffering in the valley, you suffer aloft like the soaring eagle bearing in its heart the arrow discharged by some clumsy shepherd. I see now that heaven and earth are incompatible. Yes, to him who may live in the celestial zone, God alone is possible. Therefore our souls should be weaned from all earthly things. One must love one's friends as one loves one's children, for themselves and not for one's self. The *I* causes all

the sorrows and the disappointments. My heart shall go higher than the eagle ; there is a love there which will never deceive me. As to living the earthly life, it debases us too much by causing the egoism of the senses to dominate over the spirituality of the angel within us. The pleasures afforded by passion are terribly tempestuous, paid for with enervating anxieties which destroy the springs of the soul. I went to the brink of the sea where these tempests toss ; I saw them too closely ; they have often enveloped me in their mists, the surge has not always broken at my feet, I have felt its fierce heart-chilling grasp ; I must retire to the heights, I should perish beside this vast sea. In you, as in all those who have distressed me, I see the guardian of my virtue. My life has been mingled with afflictions that have been happily proportioned to my strength, and has thus been kept pure from bad passions, without seductive repose and always prepared for God. Our attachment *was* the foolish attempt, the effort of two simple children trying to satisfy their affection, men and God.— Folly, Félix !—Ah ! " she said, after a pause, " what does this woman call you ? "

" Amédée," I replied, " Félix is a being apart, who will never belong to anyone but you."

" Henriette dies hard," she said, breaking into a seraphic smile. " But," she continued, " she will perish in the first effort of the humble Christian, of the proud mother, of the woman of the once tottering but now strengthened virtue. What shall I say ? Well then, yes, my life is consistent with itself in

its most important particulars as in its most insignificant. The heart upon which I should have fastened the early roots of tenderness, the heart of my mother, was closed to me, in spite of my persistence in trying to find one chink by which to insinuate myself. I was a girl, I came after three dead boys, and I vainly tried to fill their place in my parents' affection ; but in no way did I heal the wound dealt to the family pride. When, after this gloomy childhood, I made the acquaintance of my adorable aunt, death soon took her from me. Monsieur de Mortsauf, to whom I am vowed, has constantly afflicted me, without intermission, without knowing it, poor man ! His love has the same naïve selfishness as that felt for us by our children. He is not in the secret of the evils he brings upon me, he is always forgiven ! My children, those dear children who are ingrafted into my flesh through all their sufferings, into my soul through all their qualities, and into my nature through their innocent pleasures ; have not these children been given to me to show how much force and patience there is in a mother's breast ? Oh ! yes, my children are my virtues ! You know whether I am scourged by them, in them, and in spite of them. To become a mother, for me, was to buy the right to always suffer. When Hagar cried in the desert, an angel caused a pure spring to gush out for this too-favored slave ; but for me, when the limpid source toward which—do you remember ?—you tried to guide me, came to glide around Clochegourde, it gave me nothing but bitter

waters. Yes, you have inflicted unheard-of suffering upon me. God will doubtless forgive one to whom affection is unknown save through sorrow. But, if the keenest pains that I have felt have been imposed by you, I may have deserved them. God is not unjust. Ah! yes, Félix, a stolen kiss on the brow, may perhaps involve a sin! Perhaps one must make severe atonement for the steps one has taken ahead of one's children and husband, when one has gone walking in the evening so as to be alone with the memories and thoughts that did not belong to them, and when in so walking the soul was united to another! When the inner being contracts and shrinks so as to occupy none but the place one tenders to embraces, perhaps it is the worst of crimes! When a woman bends down to receive her husband's kiss on her hair so as to neutralize her forehead, it is a crime! It is a crime to forge one's self a future by relying upon death, a crime to picture to one's self in the future a maternity without alarms, beautiful children playing in the evenings with a father worshipped by the whole family, beneath the softened eyes of a happy mother. Yes, I have sinned, deeply sinned! I liked the penances inflicted by the Church, which were not enough to redeem those faults for which the priest was doubtless too indulgent. God, no doubt, has placed the punishment in the very core of all these errors by entrusting His vengeance to him for whom they were committed. Did I not promise myself by giving my hair? Why did I love to wear a white dress? be-

cause in this way I thought I was more your lily; had you not seen me, here, the first time, in a white dress? Alas! I have loved my children less, for all intense affection is snatched from lawful affections. So you see, Félix! all suffering has its significance. Strike, strike harder than Monsieur de Mortsauf and my children have done. This woman is an instrument of God's wrath, I will accost her without hatred, I will smile upon her; at the risk of ceasing to be a Christian, a wife and a mother, I ought to love her. If, as you say, I have been able to contribute toward preserving your heart from the contact which would have robbed it of its bloom, this Englishwoman could not hate me. A woman ought to love the mother of him she loves, and I am your mother. What have I desired in your heart? the place that Madame de Vandenesse left empty. Oh! yes, you have always complained of my coldness! Yes, indeed I am nothing but your mother. So forgive me the involuntary harshness I showed you on your arrival, for a mother should rejoice at knowing her son to be so well beloved."

She leaned her head upon my bosom, repeating: "Forgive me! forgive me!"

Then I heard strange accents. It was neither her girlish voice and its joyous notes, nor her womanly voice and its despotic terminations, nor the sighing of the saddened mother; it was heartrending, a new voice for new sorrows.

"As to you, Félix," she continued, brightening, "you are the friend who can do no wrong. Ah!

you have lost nothing in my heart, do not blame yourself in any way, do not feel the least remorse. Is it not the height of selfishness to ask you to sacrifice the most tremendous pleasures to an impossible future, since in order to enjoy them a woman abandons her children, abdicates her rank, and renounces eternity? How many times have I not thought you superior to myself! You were grand and noble; I, I was petty and criminal! Come, now it is all settled, I can never be anything to you but a lofty light, sparkling and cold, but unchangeable. Only, Félix, do not let me be alone in loving the brother whom I have chosen. Love me too! The love of a sister has no unpleasant morrow, no trying moments. You will never need to lie to this fond soul who will live upon your beautiful life, who will never neglect to grieve over your sorrows, who will rejoice in your joys, who will love the women who make you happy and will be angry over any betrayal. As for me, I have never had a brother to love in this way. Be noble enough to lay aside all pride, to merge our attachment, which has hitherto been so uncertain and stormy, into this gentle and holy affection. In this way I can yet live. I will begin first by clasping Lady Dudley's hand."

She did not weep, she! whilst pronouncing these words full of a bitter knowledge, and with which, by snatching away the last veil which hid from me her soul and its sorrows, she proved to me how manifold were the links which had bound her to me, and how many strong chains I had severed. We were in

such a delirium, that we paid no sort of attention to the rain which was falling in torrents.

"Will not Madame la Comtesse step in here a moment?" said the coachman, pointing to the principal inn of Ballan.

She gave a sign of assent, and we remained about half an hour under the roof of the entrance, to the great astonishment of the people of the inn, who wondered why Madame de Mortsauf was abroad at eleven o'clock at night. Was she going to Tours? or was she on her way back? When the storm was over, and the rain converted into what at Tours is termed a *brouée*, which did not prevent the moon from illuminating the upper mists that were rapidly carried away by the wind from above, the coachman came out and, to my great joy, proceeded to return the same way.

"Follow my orders," cried the countess, softly.

So we took the road of the plains of Charlemagne, where the rain began again. Halfway across the moor, I heard the barking of Arabella's favorite dog; a horse suddenly sprang out from beneath a clump of oaks, cleared the road at a bound, jumped the ditch hollowed out by the proprietors to distinguish their respective plots amid those waste lands that they believed capable of culture, and Lady Dudley took up her position on the moor to see the barouche pass.

"What delight to wait like this for one's love, when one can do so guiltlessly!" said Henriette.

Lady Dudley knew by the barking of the dog

that I was in the carriage; no doubt she thought that I was coming to fetch her in this way on account of the bad weather; when we reached the spot where the marchioness was waiting, she flew to the edge of the path with the skilful horsemanship which is peculiar to her, and at which Henriette marvelled as at something miraculous. As an endearment, Arabella used to call me by the last syllable only of my name, pronounced in the English way, a kind of appeal which, on her lips, had a charm befitting a fairy. She knew she would only be understood by me in crying:

"*My Dee!*"

"It is he, madame," replied the countess, gazing, under a bright moonbeam, at the fantastic creature whose impatient face was oddly enframed in her long uncurled hair.

You know how rapidly two women examine each other. The Englishwoman recognized her rival and was gloriously English; she included us both in a look full of her English scorn and disappeared across the heath with the speed of an arrow.

"Quick! to Clochegourde!" cried the countess, to whom this harsh glance had been like a blow of an axe upon the heart.

The coachman returned so as to take the Chinon road, which was better than that of Saché. As the barouche skirted the moors anew, we heard the furious gallop of Arabella's horse and the steps of her dog. They were all three going close to the woods, on the other side of the heath.

"She is going, you are losing her forever," said Henriette.

"Well, then," I replied, "let her go! She will not have a single regret."

"Oh! wretched women!" cried the countess, expressing her sympathetic horror. "But where is she going?"

"To la Grenadière, a little house near Saint-Cyr," I said.

"She goes alone," continued Henriette in a tone which convinced me that women fancy themselves united in love and never abandon each other.

Just as we entered the avenue of Clochegourde, Arabella's dog yapped joyously, running up to meet the barouche.

"She has outstripped us!" cried the countess. Then she resumed, after a pause:

"I have never seen a more beautiful woman! What hands and what a figure! Her complexion outshines the lily, and her eyes gleam like diamonds! But she rides too well, she must love to display her strength. I think she is active and violent; then she seems to me to defy the proprieties a little too boldly; the woman who recognizes no law is in great danger of minding nothing but her own caprices. Those who are so fond of display and activity, have not received the gift of constancy. According to my ideas, love requires more tranquillity; I have pictured it to myself as an immense lake in which the lead can find no bottom, where the storms may be violent, but rare, and restrained within impassable

boundaries; in which two beings live in a flowery island, far from the world, whose luxury and glare offend them. But love has to take the impress of characters, perhaps I am wrong. If the principles of nature conform to the moulds required by climate, why should it not be so with feelings in individuals? No doubt, sentiments, which on the whole follow the universal law, differ in expression only. Every person has his own method. The marchioness is the strong-minded woman who overleaps space and acts with the force of a man; who would deliver her lover from captivity, and who would kill jailers, guards and executioners; whilst some creatures only know how to love with their whole soul; in the hour of danger, they kneel, pray and die. Which of these two women do you like best? That is the whole point. Oh! yes! the marchioness loves you, she has made so many sacrifices for you! Perhaps it is she who will always love you, when you no longer love her!"

"Allow me, dear angel, to repeat what you said one day to me: how do you know these things?"

"Each sorrow has its own lesson, and I have suffered on so many points, that my knowledge is vast."

My servant had heard the order given, he thought we should return by the terraces, and was holding my horse all ready in the avenue: Arabella's dog had scented the horse; and his mistress, led by very justifiable curiosity, had followed him across the woods, where no doubt she had hidden.

"Go and make your peace," said Henriette, smiling, and without betraying any melancholy. "Tell her how much she was mistaken as to my intentions; I wanted to reveal to her the full worth of the treasure which has fallen to her; my heart harbors none but kindly feelings for her, and is particularly free from any anger or scorn; explain to her that I am her sister and not her rival."

"I will not go at all!" I cried.

"Have you never felt," she said, with the spirited pride of a martyr, "that certain niceties stop little short of insult? Go, go!"

*

I then hurried toward Lady Dudley to find out what sort of humor she was in.

"If she should get angry and leave me!" I thought, "I would come back to Clochegourde."

The dog led me under an oak-tree, from which the marchioness rushed out, crying:

"Away! Away!"

All that I could do was to follow her as far as Saint-Cyr, which we reached at midnight.

"That lady is in perfect health," said Arabella when she had dismounted. Only those who have known her can imagine all the sarcasm contained in this remark, drily ejaculated with an air which meant to say: "I, I should have been dead!"

"I forbid you to venture a single one of your triple-edged jokes about Madame de Mortsauf," I replied.

"Could it displease your Grace to hear a remark upon the perfect health enjoyed by a being dear to your precious heart? Frenchwomen, they say, hate even down to their lover's dog; in England, we love all that our sovereign lord loves, we hate all that he hates, because we are one with our lords. Pray allow me then, to love this lady as much as

you love her yourself. Only, dear boy," she said, twining her rain-soaked arms around me, "if you were to betray me, I should be neither standing nor lying, nor in a barouche flanked with lackeys, nor driving over the plains of Charlemagne, nor in any one of the plains of any country in any world, nor in my bed, nor beneath the roof of my fathers! I should be no more. I was born in Lancashire, a part of the country where the women die of love. To know you and to give you up! I would never surrender you to any power, not even death, for I would go with you."

She led me into her room, where the luxuries of comfort were already displayed.

"Love her, my dear," I said with vehemence, "she loves you, not in any scoffing way, but sincerely."

"Sincerely, darling?" she said, unlacing her riding-habit.

With lover-like vanity, I wished to reveal the sublimity of Henriette's character to this proud creature. Whilst the lady's maid, who did not know a word of French, was arranging her hair, I tried to describe Madame de Mortsauf by giving a sketch of her life, and I repeated the noble thoughts suggested to her by the crisis in which most women become warped and ill-natured. Although Arabella did not appear to be paying me the slightest attention, she did not lose any one of my words.

"I am delighted," she said when we were alone, "to discover your taste for this kind of Christian

conversation ; on one of my estates there is a vicar who composes sermons better than anybody, our peasants understand them, so well-adapted is this prose to the hearer. To-morrow I will write to my father to send this worthy man by steamer, and you will find him in Paris ; when once you have heard him, you will never want to listen to anyone else, and the more so as he, too, enjoys perfect health ; his morals will never cause you any of those shocks which produce tears, they flow without tumult, like a clear spring, and induce a delicious sleep. Every night, if it pleases you, you can satisfy your passion for sermons while digesting your dinner. English morality, dear boy, is as superior to that of Touraine as our cutlery, our silver and our horses are to your knives and animals. Do me the favor to hear my vicar, promise me you will ! I am only a woman, my love, I know how to love, I can die for you, if you wish ; but I have never studied at Eton, or at Oxford, or at Edinburgh ; I am neither doctor, nor reverend ; so I should not know how to prepare a lecture for you, I am quite unfit for it, and I should be extremely awkward at it were I to try. I do not blame you for your tastes, you might have some more depraved than this, and I should try to conform to them ; for I want you to find with me all that you like, pleasures of love, pleasures of the table, pleasures of the church, good claret and Christian virtues. Would you like me to wear a hair-shirt to-night ? She is very fortunate, this woman, to be able to serve you as morality ! In

what university do Frenchwomen take their degrees? Poor me! I can only give myself, I can only be your slave—"

"Then, why did you run away when I wanted to see you together?"

"Are you mad, *my Dee?* I would go from Paris to Rome disguised as a lackey, I would do the most foolish things for you; but how can I talk in the road to a woman who has not been introduced to me and who was about to preach a sermon in three parts? I could talk with peasants, I could ask a workman to share his bread with me, if I were hungry, I would give him two or three guineas and all would be right; but to stop a carriage, like the highway gentlemen in England! this is not in my code. Then you only know how to love, poor child! you do not know how to live? However, I am not yet exactly like you, my angel! I do not like lecturing. But, to please you, I am capable of the greatest efforts. Come now, be quiet, I will begin! I will try to become a preacher. Beside me, Jeremiah will soon be nothing but a buffoon. I shall not indulge in any more caresses unless they are interlarded with verses from the Bible."

She used her power, and took advantage of it the moment she saw that ardent expression in my eyes which showed itself as soon as her sorceries commenced. She triumphed over all, and I complacently set the grandeur of the woman who ruins herself, who renounces the future and makes love her whole virtue, above the catholic trickeries.

"Then she loves herself better than she loves you?" she said, "and she prefers something to you which is not you? How can we attach to that which is part of ourselves any more importance than that with which we honor it? No woman, however great a moralist she may be, can be the equal of man. Stamp upon us, kill us, never encumber your existence with us. It is ours to die, yours to live, great and proud. From you to us, the dagger; from us to you, love and pardon. Does the sun care about the flies which are in its rays and which take their life from him? they stay as long as they can, and, when he disappears, they die—"

"Or they fly away," I said, interrupting her.

"Or they fly away," she continued with an indifference which would have stung the most resolute of men to avail himself of the singular power with which she invested him. "Do you think it befits a woman to make a man swallow slices buttered with virtue in order to persuade him that religion is incompatible with love? Am I then an infidel? One either gives one's self, or one refuses one's self; but there is double torture in refusing one's self and moralizing, which is contrary to the law of every country. Here, you will never have any but excellent sandwiches prepared by the hand of your servant Arabella, whose whole morality will be to devise caresses that no man has yet experienced and that the angels inspire."

I know of nothing more conclusive than the banter employed by an Englishwoman, she invests it with

the eloquent gravity, and the air of pompous conviction beneath which the English conceal the superior follies of their life of prejudices. French witticism is an embroidery with which the women contrive to adorn the pleasure they bestow and the quarrels they devise; it is a moral gaud, as graceful as their toilette. But English witticism is an acid which so thoroughly corrodes those upon whom it drops, that it turns them into skeletons, cleaned and scoured. The tongue of a witty Englishwoman is like that of a tiger, which peels the flesh from the bone in playfulness. Mockery, the almighty weapon of the demon who comes and whispers sneeringly: *Is that all?* leaves a mortal venom in the wounds that she opens at will. For this night, Arabella meant to show her power like a sultan who, to prove his cleverness' amuses himself by beheading innocent people.

"My angel," she said, when she had plunged me into that semi-torpor in which all, save happiness, is forgotten, "I too, have just been moralizing! I have been wondering whether I was committing a crime in loving you, whether I was violating divine laws, and I have come to the conclusion that nothing could be more religious nor more natural. Why should God create some beings more beautiful than others, unless it be to show us that we ought to worship them? It would be a crime not to love you, for are you not an angel? This lady insults you by confounding you with other men, the rules of morality are not applicable to you, God has set you above all. Does one not approach nearer to

Him in loving you? Could He be angry with a poor woman for longing for divine things? Your great and luminous heart is so like heaven, that I am deluded like the gnats that come and burn themselves in the tapers at a fête! Would one then punish these for their error? besides, is it an error? is it not a noble adoration of light? They perish through excessive veneration, if one can call it perishing, to hurl one's self at what one loves. I am weak enough to love you, whilst this woman has the strength to remain in her Catholic shrine. Do not frown! you think that I bear her a grudge? No, my darling! I admire her morality, which has counselled her to leave you unfettered and has thus enabled me to conquer you, and to keep you for ever; for you are mine for ever, are you not?"

"Yes."

"For ever?"

"Yes."

"Then you do me a favor, sultan? I alone recognized your full value! You say she understands cultivating the ground? I, I leave this science to the farmers, I would rather cultivate your affection."

I try to recall this fascinating chatter so as to give you a good picture of this woman, to bear out what I have told you about her, and so let you into all the secret of the sequel. But how am I to describe the accessories of these pretty speeches that you know? There were follies comparable to the most extravagant fancies of our dreams; sometimes creations

like those in my bouquets: grace combined with force, tenderness and its soft languors, in contrast to the volcanic outbursts of passion; sometimes the most skilful gradations of the music adapted to the harmony of our sensualities; then frolics like those of serpents interlaced; finally, the most caressing prattle adorned with the most lively conceits, all that the intellect can add of poetry to the pleasures of the senses. She intended, by means of the blasts of her violent love, to destroy the impressions left upon my heart by Henriette's pure, devout soul. The marchioness had examined the countess as thoroughly as Madame de Mortsauf had examined her: they had both judged each other well. The strength of the attack made by Arabella revealed to me the extent of her fear and her secret admiration for her rival. In the morning, I found her with tearful eyes, she having passed a sleepless night.

"What is the matter?" I said.

"I am afraid lest my extreme love should be my ruin," she replied. "I have given all. Cleverer than I, this woman possesses something within her that you can desire. If you prefer her, think no more about me: I will not annoy you with my sorrows, my remorse, my sufferings; no, I will go and die far away from you, like a plant without its life-giving sun."

She managed to wring protestations of love from me which overwhelmed her with delight. Indeed, what is one to say to a woman who weeps in the morning? Any harshness at that time seems to

me to be infamous. If we have not resisted her the night before, are we not obliged to lie to her the next day, for the Code of Mankind makes it our duty to lie in gallantry.

"Well, I am generous," she said, wiping away her tears, "go back to her, I do not want to owe you to the force of my love, but to your own will. If you return here, I shall believe that you love me as much as I love you, which has always seemed to me impossible."

She succeeded in persuading me to return to Clochegourde. The falsity of the position upon which I was entering could not be foreseen by a man satiated with happiness. By refusing to go to Clochegourde, I was giving Lady Dudley an advantage over Henriette. Arabella would then take me away to Paris. But if I did go there, would it not be insulting to Madame de Mortsauf? In that case, I was bound to return all the more surely to Arabella. Has a woman ever forgiven such acts of treason against love? Unless she be an angel descended from Heaven, and not the purified spirit which returns there, a loving woman would prefer to see her lover suffering an agony, than to see him happy through another: the more she loves, the more she will be hurt. Looked at thus under both aspects, my situation, once I had left Clochegourde to go to La Grenadière, was as fatal to my amours of adoption as it was advantageous to my amours of speculation. The marchioness had calculated it all with practised subtlety. She confessed to me later that,

had Madame de Mortsauf not met her on the moors, she had meditated compromising me by prowling round Clochegourde.

The moment I approached the countess, whom I found pale and dispirited like a person who has suffered some severe insomnia, I suddenly exerted, not that tact, but that sense of *scent* which enables hearts that are yet young and generous to feel the import of those actions that are insignificant in the eyes of the masses, but criminal according to the statutes of noble minds. Immediately, like a child who, having climbed down into a chasm whilst playing and picking flowers, finds with anguish that he cannot possibly get back again, and only sees the friendly soil at an unattainable distance, feels himself all alone, at night, and hears wild howls, I realized that we were separated by an entire universe. There arose a great outcry in our souls, and, as it were, a re-echo of the mournful *Consummatum est!* which is cried aloud in the churches on Good Friday, at the hour the Saviour expired, a horrible scene which chills those young hearts with whom religion is the first passion. All Henriette's illusions had been killed at a blow, her heart had suffered a passion. She, so exempt from pleasure, who had never been entwined in its enervating folds, did she to-day divine the voluptuousness of happy love, that she should refuse to look at me? for she withdrew the light which for six years had been shining upon my life. Did she then know that the source of the rays emanating from our eyes was in our souls, to whom

they acted as a channel for penetrating one within the other or for blending as one, for sundering themselves, or for trifling like two unsuspecting women who tell each other everything? I was bitterly conscious of the mistake of bringing a face upon which the wings of pleasure had sprinkled their diapered dust into a home where caresses were unknown. If, the night before, I had left Lady Dudley to go off alone; if I had come back to Clochegourde, where perhaps Henriette had been awaiting me; perhaps—well, perhaps Madame de Mortsauf would not have so cruelly proposed to be my sister. She invested all her courtesies with the ostentation of an exaggerated constraint, she entered violently into her rôle so as not to swerve from it. During breakfast, she showed me a thousand attentions, humiliating attentions, she tended me as if I were an invalid whom she pitied.

"You were out walking early," said the count, "so you must have an excellent appetite, you who have a sound stomach!"

This sentence, which did not entice the smile of a would-be sister from the lips of the countess, completely convinced me of the absurdity of my position. It was impossible to be at Clochegourde by day, at Saint-Cyr by night. Arabella had relied upon my delicacy and upon the dignity of Madame de Mortsauf. All through this long day, I realized how difficult it is to become the friend of a woman long-desired. This transition, so simple when the years pave the way, is a malady in youth. I was ashamed,

I cursed pleasure, I would have liked Madame de Mortsauf to ask for my blood. I could not tear her rival to pieces, she avoided all mention of her, and to speak ill of Arabella was an infamy which would have earned me the contempt of Henriette, who was magnanimous and noble to the innermost recesses of her heart. After five years of delicious intimacy, we did not know what to talk about; our words were not in touch with our thoughts; we were both hiding devouring grief from each other, we, to whom sorrow had always been a faithful interpreter. Henriette was affecting a cheerful manner both for herself and for me; but she was sad. Although she constantly called herself my sister, and although she was a woman, she could not hit upon any idea for keeping up the conversation, and for the greater part of the time we maintained a constrained silence. She increased my inward torture, by feigning to believe herself to be this lady's only victim.

"I suffer more than you do," I said when the sister gave vent to a wholly feminine sarcasm.

"How?" she replied, with that haughty air which women put on when one tries to eclipse their sensations.

"Why, I bear all the blame."

There came a moment when the countess assumed a cold and indifferent manner toward me which overwhelmed me; I resolved to go. That evening, on the terrace, I said good-bye to the assembled family. They all followed me to the lawn where my horse was pawing the ground, and from which they

kept back. She came to me when I had seized the bridle.

"Let us go alone, on foot, down the avenue," she said.

I gave her my arm, and we went out by the courtyards, walking slowly, as if enjoying our combined movements; in this way we reached a clump of trees which shrouded a corner of the outer walls.

"Good-bye, my love!" she said as she stopped, laying her head on my breast and throwing her arms round my neck. "Good-bye, we shall never meet again! God has given me the melancholy power of looking into the future. Do you not remember the terror which seized me, one day, when you came back so handsome, so young, and I saw you turning your back upon me just as to-day when you leave Clochegourde to go to La Grenadière? Well, once again, last night, I was able to glance into our destinies. Dear, we are at this moment speaking of them for the last time. I could hardly say another few words to you, for it would no longer be my entire self which would be speaking to you, death has already smitten something within me. You will then have robbed my children of their mother, take her place beside them! you can! Jacques and Madeleine love you as if you had always made them suffer."

"Dying!" I said, terrified, looking at her and again detecting the scorching fire of her shining eyes, of which one can convey no notion to those who have not seen their dear ones attacked by this awful

malady, save by comparing her eyes to globes of burnished silver. "Dying!—Henriette, I order you to live. You once demanded solemn declarations from me, well, to-day I require one from you; swear to me to consult Origet and to obey him in all things—"

"Then do you want to oppose God's mercy?" she said, breaking in with the cry of a despair that resented being misunderstood.

"Then you do not love me enough to obey me blindly in all things, like this miserable lady?"

"Yes, whatever you choose," she said, impelled by a jealousy that caused her in one instant to overleap the boundaries which she had hitherto respected.

"I stay here," I said, kissing her eyes.

Frightened at this concession, she escaped from my arms, went to support herself against a tree; then she returned home, walking hastily, without turning her head; but I followed her, she was crying and praying. The lawn reached, I took her hand and kissed it respectfully. This unexpected submission touched her.

"I am yours all the same," I said, "for I love you as your aunt loved you."

She trembled then as she violently squeezed my hand.

"One look!" I said, "just one more of our old looks!—The woman who surrenders herself entirely," I cried, upon feeling my soul illumined by the glance she gave me, "gives less of life and of

heart than I have just received. Henriette, you are the best beloved, the only beloved."

"I shall live!" she said, "but cure yourself too."

This look had effaced the impression of Arabella's sarcasms. So I was the dupe of the two irreconcilable passions that I have described to you and by which I was alternately influenced. I loved an angel and a devil; two equally beautiful women, one clothed in all the virtues that we murder out of hatred to our imperfections, the other in all the vices that we deify through egotism. Going along this avenue, turning round from time to time to gaze once more at Madame de Mortsauf leaning against a tree and surrounded by her children, I surprised a thrill of pride in my heart at knowing myself to be the arbiter of two such noble destinies; at being the glory, for such different reasons, of two such superior women, and at having inspired such great passions, that in each case death would come if I failed them. This momentary conceit has been doubly punished, rest assured! I know not what demon told me to wait beside Arabella for the moment when some desperation, or the death of the count should give me Henriette, for Henriette loved me still: her harshness, her tears, her remorse, her Christian resignation, were eloquent traces of a feeling which could no more be erased from her heart than from mine. Whilst walking down this pretty avenue, and reflecting in this way, I was no longer twenty-five years old, but fifty. Is it not rather the young man than the woman who passes in one moment from

thirty to sixty? Although I had chased away these evil thoughts in an instant, they haunted me, I must confess! Perhaps their origin was to be found in the Tuileries, beneath the roof of the royal closet. Who could withstand the blighting spirit of Louis XVIII., he who used to say that one has genuine passions only at a mature age, because passion is neither great nor violent save when something of impotence is mingled with it and then one feels at each pleasure like a gambler playing his last stake? When I came to the end of the avenue, I turned round and rushed through it in the twinkling of an eye upon seeing Henriette still there, alone! I went to bid her a last good-bye, bathed in repentant tears the reason of which was hidden from her. Honest tears, unconsciously conceded to those irretrievably lost loves, to those virginal emotions, those flowers of life which can never more revive; for, later on, man no longer gives, he receives; he loves himself in his mistress; whilst in youth he loves his mistress in himself: later on, we inoculate the woman we love with our tastes, and maybe with our vices; whilst at the outset of life, she whom we love confers her virtues, her refinements upon us; she invites us to perfection by a smile, and teaches us devotion by her example. Woe to him who has not had his Henriette! Woe to him who has not known some Lady Dudley! If he marries, the former will not keep his wife, the latter will perhaps be deserted by his mistress; but blessed is he who can find the two in one; blessed, Natalie, is the man whom you love!

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Upon returning to Paris, Arabella and I, we became more intimate than in the past. Very soon, we both insensibly abolished the laws of etiquette that I had prescribed for myself, the strict observance of which often induces society to pardon the falsity of the position in which Lady Dudley had placed herself. The world, which so loves to penetrate beneath appearances, authorizes them as soon as it knows the secret that they cover. Lovers who are obliged to live in the midst of society will always be mistaken in overthrowing those barriers erected by the jurisprudence of fashionable circles, mistaken if they do not scrupulously observe all the conventions imposed by custom; it then becomes not so much a question of others as of themselves. The traversing of distances, the preserving of outward respect, the playing of farces, the obscuring of the mystery, all this strategy of successful love occupies the life, renews desire and protects our affection against the inertia of habit. But first passions, essentially thriftless, like young people, cut up their forests entirely instead of parcelling them out. Arabella did not approve of these *bour-*

geois ideas, she had adapted herself to them to please me; like the murderer who marks his victim beforehand so as to make him his own, she tried to compromise me before all Paris so as to make me her *sposo*. And so she exerted her coquetry to keep me in her house, for she was not content with her fashionable scandal, which, for want of proofs, merely encouraged whisperings behind fans. Seeing her so pleased at committing an indiscretion which was to define her position so openly, what could I do but believe in her love? Once plunged into the sweets of an illicit marriage, I was overwhelmed with despair, for I saw my life directed contrary to Henriette's acknowledged ideas and recommendations. I lived then with the kind of rage that seizes a consumptive when, having a presentiment of death, he refuses to be sounded. There was one corner of my heart into which I could not retreat without suffering; an avenging spirit was incessantly inspiring me with thoughts upon which I dared not dwell. My letters to Henriette described this moral sickness, and caused her infinite pain. "At the cost of so many lost treasures, she wished me at least to be happy!" she said in the only answer that I received. And I was not happy! Dear Natalie, happiness is absolute, it suffers no comparisons. My first ardor once spent, I necessarily compared these two women with each other, a contrast that I had not yet been able to study. Indeed, all great passion weighs so heavily upon our character, that it first suppresses its asperities and covers the

imprint of the habits which constitute our faults or our qualities; but, later on, with two lovers who are thoroughly accustomed to each other, the characteristics of the moral physiognomy reappear; then both judge each other mutually, and, during this reaction of the character over passion, antipathies are often declared which pave the way for those disunions of which superficial persons take advantage in order to accuse the human heart of instability. This period now began. Less blinded by the seductions, and detailing my pleasures, so to speak, I started, unintentionally perhaps, upon an examination which was prejudicial to Lady Dudley.

In the first place, I found her lacking in the spirit which distinguishes the Frenchwoman from all other women, and makes her the most delicious to love, according to the opinion of men who have been enabled by their chances in life to test the different ways of loving of every country. When a Frenchwoman is in love, she transforms herself; her boasted coquetry she exerts to adorn her love; her dangerous vanity she stifles and lays claim only to loving well. She espouses her lover's interests, hatreds and friendships; in one day she acquires the experienced subtleties of the business man, she studies the code, she understands the mechanism of credit, and tempts a banker's cash-box; thoughtless and extravagant, she will not make a single mistake and will not waste a single louis; she becomes mother, housekeeper and doctor together, and invests all her transformations with a charm of happiness

which reveals an infinite love in its most trifling details; she combines the special qualities for which the women of every country are to be recommended whilst blending this mixture by means of intelligence, that French spark which animates, tolerates, justifies, varies everything and destroys the monotony of a sentiment dependent on the first tense of a solitary verb. The Frenchwoman ever loves, without respite or fatigue, at any time, in public and in private; in public, she contrives an accent which rings in one ear alone, she speaks by her very silence, and knows how to look at you with downcast eyes; if occasion forbids her speech or look, she will employ the sand upon which her foot rests to inscribe a thought; in private, she declares her passion even during sleep; in short, she bends the world to her love. The Englishwoman, on the other hand, bends her love to the world. Accustomed by training to preserve that icy manner, that egotistical British attitude of which I have told you, she opens and closes her heart with the facility of a piece of English mechanism. She possesses an impenetrable mask which she puts on and off phlegmatically; impassioned as an Italian when no eye is looking, she becomes coldly dignified as soon as the world intervenes. The most loved man begins then to doubt his sovereignty when he sees the profound immobility of face, the composure of voice, the perfect independence of countenance that distinguishes the Englishwoman just out of her boudoir. At such times, hypocrisy goes as far as indiffer-

ence, the Englishwoman has forgotten all. Certainly, the woman who can throw off her love like a garment, inspires the belief that she may change it. What storms then upheave the waves of the heart when they are stirred by vanity, wounded at seeing a woman taking up, breaking off, and resuming her love like a piece of hand-embroidery! These women are too thoroughly mistresses of themselves, to quite belong to you; they allow the world too much influence for our reign to be complete. Where the Frenchwoman consoles the sufferer by a look, and betrays her resentment against visitors by some pretty sally, the silence of Englishwomen is absolute, jars upon the feelings and irritates the intelligence. These women lord it so incessantly upon every occasion that, with most of them, the omnipotence of *fashion* is bound to extend even to their pleasures. Whoever exaggerates modesty must exaggerate love, Englishwomen do this; they think everything of method, without the love of method producing in them the sentiment of art; whatever they may say, Protestantism and Catholicism account for the differences which make the intelligence of Frenchwomen so far superior to the methodical, calculating love of Englishwomen. Protestantism doubts, weighs, and kills faith, so it is the death of art and love. There where the world commands, worldly people must obey; but impassioned persons escape it at once, they find it unbearable.

You will therefore understand how much my vanity was offended in discovering that Lady Dudley

could not be at all content without society, and that she was familiar with the British transition: it was no sacrifice that the world imposed upon her; no, she betrayed herself naturally under two forms that were antagonistic to each other; when she loved, she loved with frenzy; no other woman of any other country could compare with her, she was as good as an entire seraglio; but the curtain once fallen over this scene of enchantment all recollection of it was banished. She responded neither to look nor smile; she was neither mistress nor slave, she was like an ambassadress obliged to round her sentences and her elbows, she was provoking in her composure and she outraged affection by her propriety; thus she degraded love to the level of necessity instead of exalting it to the height of the ideal by enthusiasm. She expressed neither fear, nor regret, nor desire; but, at the appointed hour, her tenderness would spring up like flames suddenly kindled, and would seem to protest against her reserve. In which of these two women ought I to believe? I then felt by a thousand pin pricks the endless differences that separated Henriette from Arabella. Whenever Madame de Mortsauf left me for a moment, she seemed to have bidden the air to speak to me of her; the folds of her dress, when she was going off, appealed to my eyes just as their rippling sound used to strike joyfully upon my ear when she returned; there was infinite tenderness in the way she unfolded her lids in casting her eyes to the ground; her voice, that musical voice, was

a continual caress; her conversation conveyed a continuous thought, she was always herself; she did not divide her soul into two atmospheres, one ardent and the other icy; in short, Madame de Mortsauf reserved her intellect and the flower of her thought for expressing her feelings, she was coquettish through her ideas with her children and with me. But Arabella's intelligence did not help her to make life pleasant, she did not exercise it for my benefit, it only existed through the world and for the world, she was wholly scornful; she loved to rend, and to bite, not to amuse me, but to gratify a taste. Madame de Mortsauf would have concealed her happiness from all eyes, Lady Arabella wanted to show hers to all Paris, and, with horrible hypocrisy, she kept up all the proprieties even while parading in the Bois with me. This mixture of ostentation and dignity, of love and indifference, was constantly offending my heart, which was both pure and impassioned; and, as I could not pass in this way from one temperature to another, my humor resented it; I was quivering with love when she was resuming her conventional prudishness. When I ventured to complain, not without great caution, she turned her triple-darted tongue upon me, mingling the gasconades of her passion with those English pleasantries that I have tried to describe to you. The moment she happened to be opposed to me, she made sport of wounding my heart and humbling my spirit, she worked me like paste. To observations upon the medium that

should be maintained in all things, she would reply by a caricature of my ideas, which she would carry to excess. When I reproached her for her attitude, she would ask me if I wished her to kiss me before all Paris, at the Italiens; so seriously did she undertake to do it, that, knowing her longing to be talked about, I trembled lest she should fulfil her promise. In spite of her genuine passion, I never felt any of the concentration, the goodness, the depth that there was in Henriette: she was as insatiable as a sandy soil. Madame de Mortsauf was always tranquil and felt my soul in an accentuation or a glance, whilst the marchioness was never overwhelmed by a look, a squeeze of the hand, or a gentle word. Nay more! the happiness of the night before was nothing the next day; no proof of love astonished her; she felt so great a desire for excitement, for sensation, and éclat, that nothing doubtless attained her ideal of perfection in this respect, and hence her furious efforts of love; to her exaggerated fancy, it was a question of herself and not of me. This letter from Madame de Mortsauf, a light which yet shines upon my life, and which evinced the manner in which the most virtuous woman can obey the genius of the Frenchwoman, by betraying a perpetual vigilance, a ceaseless sympathy with all my fortunes; this letter must have shown you the care with which Henriette attended to my material interests, my political relations, my moral conquests, with what ardor she encompassed my life in all lawful directions. On all these points, Lady Dudley affected the reserve of

a mere acquaintance. She never inquired into my affairs, nor my fortune, nor my work, nor the difficulties of my life, nor my aversions, nor my masculine friendships. Extravagant for herself without being generous, she really separated interests and love a little too much; whilst, without having put it to the test, I knew that in order to spare me any trouble, Henriette would have contrived for me what she never would have sought for herself. In any of those misfortunes which may chance to the most eminent and the richest men, history testifies to enough of them! I should have consulted Henriette, but I should have allowed myself to be dragged to prison without saying a word to Lady Dudley.

So far, the contrast is based upon sentiment, but it was the same with things. Luxury, in France, is the expression of the man, the reproduction of his ideas, of his particular poetry; it portrays the character, and between lovers imparts value to the most trifling attentions by causing the dominant thought of the loved one to radiate around us; but this English luxuriance, the refinements of which had fascinated me by their subtlety, was also mechanical! Lady Dudley herself contributed nothing to it, it came from the servants, it was purchased. The thousand kindly attentions at Clochegourde, in Arabella's eyes, were the business of the servants; to each his own particular duty and branch. The selection of the best lackeys was her majordomo's business, as if it were a question of horses. This woman was never at all attached to her servants,

the death of the most valuable amongst them would not have affected her in the least, by paying money he could be replaced by one that was equally skilful. As to her fellow-creatures, I never detected a tear in her eye for the misfortunes of others, she even showed a naïveté of egotism which absolutely made one laugh. The scarlet draperies of the *grande dame* covered this brazen nature. The delicious alma who rioted at night upon her rugs, who sounded all the bells of her amorous folly, readily reconciled a young man with the apathetic, stiff Englishwoman ; and so I did not discover the tufa upon which I was wasting my seeds, and which was to yield no harvest. Madame de Mortsauf had suddenly fathomed this nature in her hasty meeting ; I remembered her prophetic words. Henriette had been right in everything. Arabella's love was becoming intolerable. I have since observed that most women who ride well have very little tenderness. Like the Amazons, a breast is lacking in them, and their hearts have hardened in a certain direction, I know not which.

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Just as I was beginning to feel the weight of this yoke, when fatigue was overtaking my body and soul, when I was beginning to understand all the sanctity that genuine feeling bestows upon love, when I was overcome by the memories of Clochegourde, inhaling, in spite of the distance, the perfume of all its roses, the warmth of its terrace, hearing the song of its nightingales, in that awful moment when I was finding out the stony bed of the torrent beneath its diminished waters, I received a blow which still resounds in my life, for at every hour it finds an echo.

I was working in the closet of the king, who was to go out at four o'clock ; the Duc de Lenoncourt was on duty ; seeing him come in, the king asked after the countess ; I abruptly raised my head in too significant a manner ; the king, shocked at this demonstration, gave me a look which always preceded those severe remarks that he knew so well how to make.

"Sire, my poor daughter is dying," replied the duke.

"Will the king deign to grant me leave ?" I said

with tears in my eyes, braving the gathering anger.

"Hurry, milord!" he replied, smiling at having put an epigram into each word and sparing me his reprimand in consideration of his own witticism.

Courtier rather than father, the duke did not ask for any leave and stepped into the king's carriage to accompany him. I left without saying good-bye to Lady Dudley, who fortunately was gone out and to whom I wrote saying that I was going on a mission in the king's service. At the Croix-de-Berny, I met his majesty who was returning from Verrières. As he accepted a bouquet of flowers which he let fall at his feet, the king gave me a look full of those royal ironies which are overwhelmingly penetrating, and which seemed to say: "If you wish to become anything in politics, return! Do not amuse yourself parleying with the dead!" The duke gave me a melancholy wave of the hand. The two pompous carriages drawn by eight horses, the gilded colonels, the escort and its whirlwinds of dust passed rapidly to the cry of "Vive le roi!" It seemed to me that the Court had trampled upon the body of Madame de Mortsauf with the callousness that nature shows for our catastrophes. Although an excellent man, the duke would doubtless go and play whist with Monsieur, after the king retired to rest. As to the duchess, she had long since dealt her daughter the first blow by speaking to her, she alone, of Lady Dudley.

My rapid journey was like a dream, but the dream of a ruined gambler; I was in despair at not having

received any news. Had the confessor carried severity so far as to forbid me admission to Clochegourde? I accused Madeleine, Jacques, the Abbé de Dominis, everybody, even Monsieur de Mortsauf. Beyond Tours, passing out by the bridges of Saint-Sauveur, to go down into the road bordered by poplars which leads to Poncher, and that I had so much admired when I was hurrying in search of my unknown, I met Monsieur Origet; he guessed that I was going to Clochegourde, I guessed that he was returning from there; we stopped our carriages and we got down, I to ask for news and he to give me some.

"Well, how is Madame de Mortsauf?" I said.

"I question if you will find her alive," he replied. "She is dying an awful death, she is dying of starvation. When she sent for me in June last, no medical power could fight the disease; she had those dreadful symptoms that Monsieur de Mortsauf no doubt has described to you, as he believes he has experienced them. Madame la Comtesse was not then under the temporary influence of a disturbance due to an internal struggle, that medicine regulates and which becomes the cause of a better condition, or under the effect of an incipient crisis from which the disorder mends; no, the malady had reached a point at which skill is of no avail; it is the incurable result of a sorrow, just as a mortal wound is the consequence of a stab. This affection is produced by the inertia of an organ the play of which is as necessary to life as that of the heart. Sorrow has served

the turn of the dagger. Make no mistake! Madame de Mortsauf is dying of some secret grief."

"Secret!" I said. "Her children have not been ill at all?"

"No," he said, looking at me significantly, "and, since she has been seriously attacked, Monsieur de Mortsauf has ceased tormenting her. I can be of no further use, Monsieur Deslandes, of Azay, will do; no cure exists, and the sufferings are horrible. Rich, young, beautiful, and to die, emaciated, aged, by hunger, for she will die of hunger! For forty days, the stomach, being as it were, closed, rejects all nourishment, no matter in what form it may be presented."

Monsieur Origet pressed the hand I held out to him, he had almost asked me for it by a gesture of respect.

"Courage, monsieur!" he said, raising his eyes to Heaven.

His words expressed compassion for sufferings that he believed to be mutually shared; he did not suspect the envenomed sting contained in them, which struck me to the heart like an arrow. I abruptly returned to my carriage, promising the postilion a handsome reward if I should arrive in time.

In spite of my impatience, it seemed to me as if the distance were accomplished in but a few minutes, so absorbed was I in the bitter reflections which were crowding into my mind. She is dying of sorrow, and her children are well! then she was dying because of me! My threatening conscience pronounced one of those indictments that resound all

through life and sometimes beyond. How weak and how impotent is human justice! it only avenges palpable action. Why death and disgrace to the murderer who kills at a blow, who generously surprises you during sleep and sends you to sleep for ever, or who strikes unawares, sparing you the agony? Why the happy life, why esteem to the murderer who sheds gall into the soul drop by drop and undermines the body so as to destroy it? How many unpunished murderers! what complaisance for fashionable vice! what acquittal for the homicide caused by moral persecutions! I know not what avenging hand suddenly lifted the painted curtain which covers society. I beheld several of those victims whom you know as well as I do: Madame de Beauséant, gone to Normandy, dying, a few days before my departure! the Duchesse de Langeais compromised! Lady Brandon arrived in Touraine, there to die in that humble house in which Lady Dudley had stayed for two weeks, and killed, by what horrible tragedy? you know! Our period abounds in events of this kind. Who has not heard of the poor young woman who poisoned herself, overcome by the jealousy which perhaps was killing Madame de Mortsauf? Who has not shuddered at the fate of that lovely young girl, who, like some flower stung by a gad-fly, pined away after two years of married life, victim of her chaste ignorance, victim of a wretch to whom Ronquerolles, Montriveau, and de Marsay hold out their hands, because he is useful to their political schemes? Who has

not thrilled at the story of the last moments of the woman whom no prayer could move and who refused to see her husband again after having paid his debts so nobly? Has not Madame d'Aiglemont been very near the grave, and, but for my brother's care, would she be alive? The world and science are accomplices in those crimes for which there is no court of assize. It seems that nobody dies of grief, nor of despair, nor of love, nor of secret poverty, nor of fruitlessly nurtured hopes, ceaselessly replanted and uprooted. Recent nomenclature has ingenious words that explain everything: gastritis, pericarditis, the many feminine maladies which can only be named in a whisper, serve as passports to coffins escorted by hypocritical tears which are soon dried by the notary's hand. Is there any law that we know not of at the bottom of this misery? Should the centenary pitilessly scatter the soil with dead, and drain it around him so as to raise himself, just as a millionaire assimilates the efforts of a multitude of small industries? Is there a strong venomous life which feasts upon gentle, tender creatures? My God! then did I belong to the race of tigers? Remorse clutched my heart with its burning fingers, and my cheeks were streaked with tears when I entered the avenue of Clochegourde on a damp October morning that was stripping the dead leaves of the poplars, the planting of which had been superintended by Henriette, in that avenue where she had but lately waved her handkerchief as if to call me back! Was she alive? Might I feel

her two white hands upon my bowed head? In one moment I paid for all the pleasures given by Arabella and found them dearly sold! I swore to myself never to see her again, and I took an aversion to England. Although Lady Dudley may be one variety of the species, I included all Englishwomen in the gloom of my decision.

As I entered Clochegourde, I received a fresh blow. I found Jacques, Madeleine and the Abbé de Dominis kneeling all three at the foot of a wooden cross set up in the corner of a piece of ground that had been enclosed in the precincts, at the time the iron gate was erected, and which neither the count nor the countess had wished to have cut down. I jumped out of my carriage and went toward them with my face streaming with tears and my heart broken at the sight of these two children and this grave person imploring God. The old groom was there too, a few steps away, with bared head.

"Well, monsieur?" I said to the Abbé de Dominis, kissing the foreheads of Jacques and Madeleine, who looked at me coldly, without interrupting their prayer.

The abbé rose, I took his arm to support myself as I said:

"Is she still alive?"

He inclined his head with a sad and gentle movement.

"Speak, I implore you, in the name of Our Saviour's passion! Why are you praying at the foot of this cross? Why are you here and not beside her?

Why are her children out of doors on so cold a morning? Tell me all, so that I may not cause any misery through ignorance."

"For several days, Madame la Comtesse has only seen her children at stated hours. Monsieur," he continued, after a pause, "perhaps you ought to wait a few hours before seeing Madame de Mortsauf again; she is much changed! but it will be well to prepare her for this interview, you might cause her some increase of suffering—As to death, it would be a mercy."

I squeezed the hand of this holy man whose glance and voice soothed the wounds of others without irritating them.

"We are all praying here for her," he resumed, "because, for several days, she, so holy, so resigned, so fit to die, has felt a secret horror of death, she looks at those who are full of life with eyes in which, for the first time, dark and envious feelings are reflected. Her excitement is roused, I think, less by fear of death than by an internal intoxication, by the faded flowers of her youth which ferment as they wither. Yes, the evil spirit is contending against Heaven for this lovely soul. Madame endures her struggle on the Mount of Olives, she adds her tears to the fall of the white roses which crowned her married Jephthahlike head, and which have dropped one by one. Wait, do not show yourself yet, you will bring her the splendors of the Court, she will see the reflex of the worldly festivities in your face, and you will reinforce her com-

plaints. Have pity upon a weakness that God Himself forgave His Son as man. Besides, what credit would it be to us to conquer without an adversary? Allow her confessor or me, two old men whose decay can in no way offend her sight, to prepare her for an unexpected interview, for emotions which the Abbé Birotteau had required her to renounce. But in the things of this world there is an invisible thread of heavenly causes that a religious eye perceives, and, if you have come here, perhaps you have been brought by one of those celestial stars which shine in the moral world, and which lead toward the grave as toward the manger."

Then, putting forth that moving eloquence which falls upon the heart like dew, he told me that for six months the countess had been suffering more each day, in spite of Monsieur Origet's precautions. The doctor had come to Clochegourde every night for two months, trying to wrest this victim from death, for the countess had said: "Save me!"

"But, in order to cure the body, it was necessary to cure the heart!" the old doctor had cried one day.

"Following the progress of the disease, the words of this ordinarily gentle woman have become bitter," said the Abbé de Dominis. "She cries out to the earth to keep her, instead of crying to God to take her; then she repents for having murmured against the decrees from on high. These alternations wring her heart, and make the struggle

between the body and soul horrible. The body often triumphs! 'You cost me very dear!' she said one day to Madeleine and Jacques, pushing them away from her bedside. But, at that moment, reminded of God by the sight of me, she said these angelic words to Mademoiselle Madeleine: 'The happiness of others becomes the joy of those who can never be happy again.' And her accent was so heartrending, that I felt my eyes filling. She falls, it is true; but, at every stumble, she rises again nearer Heaven."

Agonized by the successive messages that chance was sending me, and which, in this great concert of misfortunes, were making ready, with mournful cadence, for the funeral theme, the deep lament of expiring love, I cried:

"You do believe that this beautiful severed lily will reflower in Heaven?"

"You left her still a flower," he replied, "but you will find her consumed, purified in the fire of sorrow, and pure as a diamond that is still buried in the embers. Yes, this brilliant spirit, angelic star, will emerge shining from its clouds to go into the realm of light."

Just as I was squeezing the hand of this evangelical man, my heart oppressed with gratitude, the count put his head, now grown quite white, out of the house and rushed toward me with an animation in which surprise was apparent.

"She was right! here he is. 'Félix, Félix, here is Félix coming!' Madame de Mortsauf exclaimed.

My friend," he continued, looking at me with eyes of insane terror, "Death is here. Why did he not take an old fool like myself whom he had attacked?—"

I walked toward the château, summoning up my courage; but, on the threshold of the long anteroom which, in going through the house, led from the lawn to the perron, the Abbé Birotteau stopped me. "Madame la Comtesse begs you will not come in just yet," he said.

At a glance I saw the servants coming and going, all bustling, frenzied with grief and no doubt astonished at the orders Manette was giving them.

"What is happening?" said the count, scared at this commotion, as much through dread of the awful event as through the anxiety natural to his disposition.

"An invalid's whim," replied the abbé, "Madame la Comtesse does not wish to receive Monsieur le Vicomte in her present state; she talks of dressing, so why thwart her?"

Manette went to fetch Madeleine, and we saw Madeleine coming out a few moments after having gone into her mother's room. Then, as we all five, Jacques and his father, the two abbés and I, all silent, walked up and down the façade on the lawn, we passed beyond the house. I gazed in turn at Montbazon and Azay, looking at the yellowing valley, the gloom of which corresponded then as always to the feelings which were stirring me. All of a sudden I saw the darling hastening in search of the

autumn flowers and picking them, in order, no doubt, to make up some bouquets. Thinking of all that was signified in this rejoinder to my amorous attentions, I was overcome by an indescribable revulsion of feeling, I staggered, my sight grew dim, and the two abbés, between whom I happened to be, carried me to the edge of a terrace where I remained a moment as if crushed, but without losing entire consciousnesss.

"Poor Félix," said the count, "she did well to forbid our writing to you, she knows how much you love her."

Although prepared to suffer, I had found myself helpless against an attention which embodied all my memories of happiness.

"There it is," I thought to myself, "this plain, as withered as a skeleton, illumined by a gray daylight, in the midst of which a single flower-bush used to rise, which I never could admire during my walks without a sinister shudder, and which was the image of this dismal hour!"

All was gloom in this little castle, once so alive, so animated! all mourned, all spoke of despair and neglect. There were half raked paths, duties begun and abandoned, workmen standing and looking at the château. Although they were gathering grapes in the vineyards, one could hear neither noise nor chatter. The vineyards seemed to be deserted, so intense was the silence. We went like people whose sorrow resents commonplace words, and we listened to the count, the only one of us who spoke.

After the set phrases prompted by the mechanical love he felt for his wife, the count was induced by his bent of mind to complain of the countess. His wife never would take care of herself or listen to him when he gave her good advice; he had been the first to perceive the symptoms of the malady; for he had studied them in himself, had struggled against them and had cured himself of them all alone, without any other help than that of a diet and by avoiding all deep emotion. He could easily have cured the countess, too; but a husband should not take such responsibilities, particularly when he has the misfortune to see his experience upon every subject disdained. In spite of his remonstrances, the countess had engaged Origet as her doctor. Origet, who had formerly so mismanaged him, was killing his wife for him. If this malady was caused by excessive troubles, he had been in every condition to get it; but what troubles could his wife have? The countess was happy, she had neither worries nor vexations! Thanks to his care and his good ideas, their fortune was in a satisfactory condition; he allowed Madame de Mortsauf to reign at Clochegourde; her children, well brought up, and in good health, gave no further anxiety; whence then, could the disease proceed? And he argued and mingled the expression of his despair with insane accusations. Then, presently recalled by some recollection to the admiration that this noble creature merited, a few tears fell from the eyes that had been so long dry.

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Madeleine came to tell me that her mother was waiting for me. The Abbé Birotteau followed me. The grave young girl remained beside her father, saying that the countess wished to be alone with me, and alleged the fatigue that the presence of several persons would cause her. The solemnity of this moment produced within me that impression of inward heat and outward cold which overwhelms us in the great events of life. The Abbé Birotteau, one of those men whom God has marked as His own by endowing them with gentleness and simplicity, and by granting them patience and forbearance, took me apart.

"Monsieur," he said, "you must know that I have done all that was humanly possible to prevent this meeting. The welfare of this saint required it should be so. I have only thought of her and not of you. Now that you are once more to see her whom the angels should have forbidden you to approach, know that I shall remain between you to defend her against yourself and maybe, against herself! Respect her weakness. I am not asking you, as a priest, to have mercy upon her, but as a humble

friend whom you did not know you had, and who wants to spare you remorse. Our dear patient is unquestionably dying of hunger and thirst. Ever since this morning she has been in that state of feverish irritation which precedes this awful death, and I cannot disguise from you how much she regrets life. The outcries of her rebellious flesh die away in my heart, where they clash with other yet too sensitive echoes; but Monsieur de Dominis and I, we accepted this religious task, so as to conceal the sight of this moral agony from this noble family, who no longer recognize their morning and evening star; for the husband, the children, the servants, all ask: 'Where is she?' so much is she changed. At sight of you, the complaints will revive. Dismiss the thoughts of a man of the world, forget the vanities of the heart, be to her an auxiliary of Heaven and not that of earth. Do not let this saint die in an hour of doubt, giving vent to words of despair."

I made no reply. My silence dismayed the poor confessor. I saw, heard and walked, and yet I was no longer upon earth. This thought: "Whatever has happened? in what state am I to find her, for every one to use such precautions?" gave birth to apprehensions that were all the more cruel in that they were undefined: it contained all the sorrows together. We reached the door of the room, which the anxious confessor opened.

Then I saw Henriette in a white dress, sitting on her little sofa in front of the fireplace which was ornamented with our two vases full of flowers; then

more flowers on the stand in front of the window. The face of the Abbé Birotteau, stupefied at the sight of this improvised fête and at the alteration in this room, suddenly restored to its old condition, told me that the dying woman had banished the repulsive trappings that surround the bed of the sick. She had spent the last forces of a flickering fever in preparing her untidy room to worthily receive him whom she loved at this moment more than anything else. Her emaciated face, which wore the greenish pallor of half-open magnolia flowers, appeared beneath billows of lace like the first outlines of a cherished head drawn in chalk upon the yellow canvas of a picture; but, in order to understand how deeply the clutch of the vulture sank into my heart, imagine the eyes of this sketch completed and full of life, hollow eyes which shone with unnatural lustre in a lifeless face. She no longer had that calm majesty which the constant victory over her troubles had been used to impart. Her forehead, the only part of the face which had kept its fine proportions, indicated the aggressive assumption of desire and restrained defiance. In spite of the waxlike tints of her drawn countenance, inward fires emanated from it with a radiance like that of the fluid which simmers over the fields on a hot day. Her sunken temples, her wasted cheeks, showed the inner structure of the face, and the smile on her white lips vaguely resembled the grin of the dead. The gown folded over her breast showed the emaciation of her beautiful

bust. The turn of her head plainly told that she knew she was altered and that she was in despair about it. It was no longer my delicious Henriette, nor the sublime and saintly Madame de Mortsauf; it was Bossuet's nameless something, which was struggling against nothingness, and that hunger and baffled desires were inciting to the egotistical fight of life against death. I came and sat down beside her, taking her hand, which I felt was burning and parched, to kiss it. She divined my painful surprise in the very effort I made to conceal it. Her discolored lips were then strained over her famished teeth in an attempt at one of those forced smiles beneath which we hide alike the sarcasm of revenge, the expectation of pleasure, the rapture of the soul and the fury of disappointment. "Ah! it is death, my poor Félix," she said, "and you do not like death! odious death, death of which every creature, even the most intrepid lover, has a horror. Love finishes here; I knew it well. Lady Dudley will never see you astonished at the change in her. Ah! why have I so longed for you, Félix? You have come at last; I reward you for this devotion by the horrible sight which formerly made the Comte de Rancé turn Trappist; I, who longed to remain lovely and great in your memory, to live in it as an eternal lily, I sicken you of your illusions. True love calculates nothing. But do not run away, stay here. Monsieur Origet thought me much better this morning, I shall come back to life, I shall revive under your glances. Then, when I shall

have recovered some strength, when I begin to be able to take some nourishment, I shall grow beautiful again. I am hardly thirty-five, I may yet have some happy years. Happiness rejuvenates, and I want to know happiness. I have made some delightful plans: we will leave *them* at Clochegourde and we will go to Italy together."

My eyes grew wet with tears, I turned toward the window as if to look at the flowers; the Abbé Birotteau hastily approached me, and leaned over the bouquet:

"No tears!" he whispered.

"Henriette, then you do not love our dear valley any more?" I answered so as to lend color to my sudden movement.

"Yes," she said, bringing her forehead under my lips with a coaxing gesture, "but, without you, it is fatal to me— *Without you*," she added, brushing my ear with her burning lips as if to breathe these three syllables into it like two sighs.

I was appalled at this mad caress which still further heightened the dreadful communications of the two abbés. At this moment, my first surprise vanished; but, if I could use my sense, my will was not strong enough to repress the nervous emotion which agitated me during this scene. I listened without reply, or rather I replied by a fixed smile and signs of assent, so as not to vex her, behaving like a mother with her child. After having been startled at the metamorphosis of the body, I saw that the woman, once so imposing in her loftiness,

showed in her attitude, her voice, manners, looks and ideas, the naïve ignorance of a child, the artless graces, the eagerness of impulse, the profound indifference to what is not its desire nor itself, in fact, all the weaknesses which commend the child to protection. Is it so with all the dying? do they all strip off social disguises, in the same way that the child has not yet assumed them? Or, finding herself upon the brink of eternity, was the countess, by admitting no human feelings but that of love, proclaiming, like Chloe, its sweet innocence?

"You shall restore me to health, Félix, as you did once before," she said, "and my valley will do me good. How could I not eat whatever you were to give me? You are such a good nurse! Then you are so rich in strength and health, that with you life is contagious. Darling, prove to me then that I cannot die, die mistaken! They think that my keenest agony is thirst. Oh! yes, love, I am indeed thirsty. It sickens me to look at the water of the Indre, but my heart feels a more burning thirst. I was thirsting for you," she said, in a more stifled voice, taking my hands in her hot hands, and drawing me to her so as to breathe these words in my ear: "my agony has been not to see you! Did you not tell me to live? I want to live. I want to ride too, I do! I want to know everything, Paris, fêtes, pleasures."

Ah! Natalie, this horrible outcry, that the materialism of the deluded senses chills by distance of time, made our ears, the old priest's and mine, ring

again: the accents of this magnificent voice told of a lifelong struggle: the anguish of a true love disappointed. The countess rose with an impatient motion, like a child who wants a toy. When the confessor saw his penitent like this, the poor man suddenly fell on his knees, clasped his hands and recited prayers.

"Yes, to live!" she said, making me get up and supporting herself against me, "to live upon realities and not upon lies. Everything in my life has been a lie; for several days I have been counting them, these impostures! Is it possible that I can be dying, I who have not lived, I who have never been to look for anybody on a moor?"

She stopped, appeared to be listening and detected I know not what odor through the walls.

"Félix! the vintagers are going to dine, and I, I," she said in a childish voice, "who am the mistress, I am hungry. It is the same with love; they, they are happy!"

"*Kyrie eleison!*" said the poor abbé, who, with clasped hands, and eyes upturned to Heaven, was reciting the litany.

She flung her arms round my neck, embraced me violently and strained me to her, saying:

"You shall not escape me again! I want to be loved, I will indulge in follies like Lady Dudley, I will learn English so as to say: *My Dee* properly."

She nodded at me as she used to do when she left me, to tell me that she was coming back immediately.

"We will dine together," she said, "I will tell Manette—"

She was stopped by a faintness which suddenly overcame her, and I laid her all dressed upon her bed.

"Once before, you carried me like this," she said, opening her eyes.

She was very light, but above all feverish; when I took her up, I felt her whole body burning. Monsieur Deslandes came in, was astonished to find the room decked out in this way; but, seeing me, all appeared clear to him.

"One suffers a great deal in dying, monsieur," she said in a tremulous voice.

He sat down, felt his patient's pulse, rose abruptly, came to speak to the priest in a low voice, and went out; I followed him.

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"To spare her frightful agony," he said. "Who could have believed in such strength? We cannot understand how it is she is still alive except by thinking of the manner in which she has lived. This is the forty-second day that madame la comtesse has neither drunk, nor eaten, nor slept."

Monsieur Deslandes asked for Manette. The Abbé Birotteau led me out into the gardens.

"Let us leave the doctor alone," he said, "with Manette's help, he will inject opium. Well, you heard her," he said, "if however she is conscious of these mad impulses!—"

"No," I said, "she is no longer herself."

I was stupefied with grief. The further I went, the more each detail of this scene gained in intensity. I went out abruptly by the little door at the bottom of the terrace, and went to sit in the ferry-boat, where I hid myself so as to be alone to devour my thoughts. I tried to detach myself from that force by which I lived, a torture like that with which the Tartars used to punish an adulterer by fastening a limb of the culprit in a piece of wood, and leaving him a knife to cut it off with, if he did not wish to die of hunger: a terrible lesson for my soul, the best half of which had to be severed from me. My life too was spoiled! Despair suggested the strangest ideas to me. First I wanted to die with her, then to go and shut myself up in La Meilleraye, where the Trappists had just established themselves. My dimmed eyes no longer saw outward objects. I was gazing at the windows of the room where Henriette was suffering, thinking to see the light which illumined it on the night I had affianced myself to her. Ought I not to have submitted to the simple life she had created for me, by keeping myself for her in the study of affairs? Had she not ordained that I should be a great man, so as to preserve me from the low and shameful passions that I had passed through, like all men? Was not chastity a sublime distinction which I had not known how to keep? Love, as conceived by Arabella, suddenly disgusted me. Just as I was raising my drooping head while wondering where light and hope were to come from hereafter, what motive I should

have in living, the air was stirred by a slight noise. I turned round toward the terrace, there I saw Madeleine alone, walking slowly up and down. Whilst I was climbing up again toward the terrace in order to call the dear child to account for the cold look she had given me at the foot of the cross, she was sitting on the bench; when she saw me half way, she got up and pretended not to have seen me, so as to avoid finding herself alone with me; her walk was hasty, significant.

She hated me, she was shunning her mother's murderer. Returning to Clochegourde by the steps, I saw Madeleine like a statue, motionless and upright, listening to the sound of my footsteps. Jacques was seated on a step, and his attitude was expressive of the same insensibility which had struck me when we had all been walking together, and had suggested those ideas that we leave in a corner of our mind, to resume them and sift them later on, at leisure. I have noticed that young people who bear death within them are all indifferent to funerals. I wanted to examine this sombre mind. Had Madeleine kept her thoughts to herself alone, had she inspired Jacques with her aversion?

"You know," I said as a way of beginning the conversation, "that in me you have the most devoted of brothers."

"Your kindness is useless, I shall follow my mother," he replied, giving me a fierce look of sorrow.

"Jacques," I cried, "you too?"

He coughed, walked far away from me; then, when he came back, he quickly showed me his bloodstained handkerchief.

"Do you understand?" he said.

So each one of them had a fatal secret. As I have since seen, the sister and brother were avoiding each other. Henriette fallen, all was ruin at Clochegourde.

"Madame is asleep," Manette came to tell us, delighted at knowing the countess to be out of pain.

In such dreadful moments, although each one knows the inevitable end, true love goes crazy and clings to trifling pleasures. Minutes are ages that one longs to make of benefit. One would like the sick to be resting upon roses, one would like to assume their sufferings, one would like the last sigh for their sakes to be unexpected.

"Monsieur Deslandes has had the flowers taken away, they acted too strongly on madame's nerves," said Manette.

So then, the flowers had caused her delirium, she had not been an accomplice of it. The loves of the earth, the festivities of fecundation, the caresses of the plants had intoxicated her by their sweetness and no doubt had awakened the thoughts of happy love which had been slumbering within her ever since her youth.

"Do come, Monsieur Félix," she said to me, "come and see madame, she is as lovely as an angel."

I came back to the dying woman just as the sun was setting and gilding the tracery of the roofs of the château d'Azay. All was calm and pure. A soft light was shed upon the bed in which Henriette was reposing, steeped in opium. At this moment the body was, so to speak, annulled; the soul alone reigned in the face, serene as a beautiful sky after a storm. Blanche and Henriette, these two glorious aspects of the one woman, were reappearing all the more beautiful, because my memory, my thought, and my imagination, helping nature, were repairing the alterations in every feature in which the triumphant soul was emitting its glow in fluctuations that blended with those of her breathing. The two abbés were seated beside the bed. The count stood crushed, recognizing the banners of death which were fluttering over this worshipped creature. I took the place that she had occupied on the sofa. Then we all four exchanged looks in which admiration of this celestial beauty was mingled with tears of regret. The light of the soul announced God's return to one of his most beautiful tabernacles. The Abbé de Dominis and I, we spoke to each other by signs, interchanging mutual ideas. Yes, the angels were watching over Henriette! Yes, their blades were shining above this noble brow which was recovering the grand expressions of that virtue which used to make, as it were, a visible soul with which the spirits of its sphere conversed. The lines of her face were becoming purified, everything in her was being ennobled and was growing majestic beneath

the invisible censers of the seraphim who were guarding her. The green tints of the bodily suffering were giving way to perfectly white tones, to the dull cold pallor of approaching death. Jacques and Madeleine came in; Madeleine made us all shiver at the impulse of adoration which made her fling herself in front of the bed, prompted her to clasp her hands and inspired her with this sublime exclamation:

"At last, there is my mother!"

Jacques was smiling, he was sure of following his mother where she was going.

"She is reaching the haven," said the Abbé Birotteau.

The Abbé de Dominis looked at me as if to say: "Did I not tell you that the Star would rise shining?"

Madeleine remained with her eyes fastened upon her mother, breathing when she breathed, imitating her slightest breath, the last thread by which she was clinging to life, and which we followed with terror, fearing at each effort to see it break. Like an angel at the gates of the sanctuary, the young girl was eager and calm, strong and prostrated. At this moment the *Angelus* rang out from the town clock.

The undulations of the softened strain wafted the chimes in swells which told us that at this hour all Christianity was repeating the words spoken by the angel to the woman who redeemed the sins of her sex. This night the *Ave Maria* seemed to us a

salutation from Heaven. The prophecy was so clear and the event so close, that we burst into tears. The murmurs of the evening, the sweet breeze in the foliage, the last chirps of the birds, the chorus and the hum of insects, the voice of the waters, the plaintive cry of the tree-frog: the whole country was saying farewell to the loveliest lily of the valley, to her simple, rural life. This religious poetry, united to all these natural poems, so well expressed the parting chant, that our sobs were immediately echoed. Although the door of the room was open, we were so deeply absorbed in this dreadful contemplation, as if to imprint the memory of it forever on our minds, that we had not noticed the servants of the house kneeling in a group, fervently praying. All these poor folk, brought up to hope, still thought to save their mistress, and this unmistakable omen overpowered them. At a sign from the Abbé Birotteau, the old groom went out to fetch the Curé of Saché. The doctor, standing beside the bed, as imperturbable as science, and who was holding the patient's benumbed hand, had signed to the confessor to tell him that this sleep was the last painless hour that remained to the recalled angel. The moment had come to administer the last sacraments of the Church. At nine o'clock, she quietly awoke, looked at us with an astonished, but gentle eye, and we all once more beheld our idol in the beauty of her best days.

"Mother, you are too beautiful to die, life and health are coming back to you!" cried Madeleine.

"Dear child, I shall live, but in you," she said, smiling.

Then there were heartrending embraces from the mother to the children and the children to the mother. Monsieur de Mortsauf kissed his wife reverently on the forehead. The countess blushed as she looked at me.

"Dear Félix," she said, "this, I think, is the only sorrow that I shall ever have given you, I! but forget whatever I may have said to you, poor fool that I was."

She stretched out her hand, I took it to kiss it, so she said with her graciously virtuous smile:

"As in the old days, Félix?"—

We all left her, and went into the salon for the time that the sick woman's last confession was to take. I placed myself beside Madeleine. In the presence of all, she could not shun me without rudeness; but, in imitation of her mother, she looked at no one, and remained silent without once raising her eyes to mine.

"Dear Madeleine," I said in a low voice, "what have you against me? Why these cold feelings, when in the presence of death all should be reconciled?"

"I fancy I can hear all that my mother is saying at this moment," she answered, assuming the pose of head that Ingres hit upon for his *Merè de Dieu*, that Virgin, already sad and prepared to shelter the world in which her Son is to perish.

"And you condemn me at the very moment that your mother absolves me, if, indeed, I am guilty?"

"*You*, and always *you!*"

Her accent betrayed a hatred as deliberate as that of a Corsican, implacable as are the judgments of those who, not having studied life, can acknowledge no extenuation of sins committed against the laws of affection. An hour elapsed in profound silence.

The Abbé Birotteau returned after having heard the general confession of the Comtesse de Mortsauf, and we all re-entered the room just as Henriette, carrying out one of those ideas which strike exalted minds, all sisters in spirit, had had herself clothed in a long garment which was to be her shroud. We found her sitting up, happy in her atonements, happy in her hopes; in the fireplace I saw the black ashes of my letters, which had just been burned, a sacrifice that she would not make, the confessor told me, until the moment of death. She smiled at us all with her old smile. Her tear-filled eyes told of supreme revelation, she could already behold the celestial joys of the promised land.

"Dear Félix," she said, holding out her hand to me and squeezing mine, "stay. You must help in one of the last scenes of my life, and one which will not be the least painful of all, but in which you are deeply concerned."

She made a sign, and the door was shut. At her invitation, the count sat down; the Abbé Birotteau and I, we remained standing. Assisted by Manette, the countess got up, knelt down in front of the count and insisted upon remaining so. Then, when

Manette had retired, she raised her head, which she had leant upon the knees of the astonished count.

"Although I have behaved toward you as a faithful wife," she said in a faltering voice, "I may, monsieur, have sometimes failed in my duties; I have just prayed to God to grant me the strength to ask your forgiveness for my faults. In the solicitude of a friendship bestowed outside the family, I may have shown more affectionate attentions than those I owed to you. I may perhaps have irritated you against me by the comparison that you might have made between these cares, these thoughts and those I gave to you. I have had," she said in a low voice, "a deep friendship that nobody, not even he who was its object, has fully known. Although I have remained virtuous according to human laws, although I have been an irreproachable wife to you, thoughts, involuntary or voluntary, have often flashed across my mind, and I am now afraid that I welcomed them too kindly. But, as I have loved you tenderly, as I have remained your submissive wife, and as the clouds, in passing through the sky, have not altered its purity, you see me asking for your blessing with an innocent brow. I shall die without any bitter thought if I hear from your lips a gentle word for your Blanche, for the mother of your children, and if you will forgive her all those things that she has only forgiven herself after the assurances of the tribunal upon which we all depend."

"Blanche, Blanche," cried the old man, suddenly

shedding tears on his wife's head, "do you want to kill me?" He raised her to him with unusual force, kissed her religiously on the forehead and, holding her thus: "Have I no pardon to ask from you?—" he continued. "Have I not often been hard, I? Are you not exaggerating childish scruples?"

"Maybe," she rejoined. "But, dear one, be indulgent to the weaknesses of the dying, make my mind easy. When this hour comes to you, you will remember that I left you, blessing you. Will you allow me to leave to our friend here this token of a deep feeling?" she said, pointing to a letter which was on the mantelpiece. "He is now my adopted son, that is all. The heart, dear count, has its testaments: my last wishes charge this dear Félix with the fulfilment of sacred deeds, I do not think I have presumed too much upon him, make it so that I may not have presumed too much upon you by permitting me to leave him a few thoughts. I am a woman after all," she said, drooping her head with gentle melancholy: "after my pardon. I ask a favor of you.—Read it, but only after my death," she said, holding out the mysterious writing to me.

The count saw his wife turn pale, he picked her up and himself carried her to the bed, where we surrounded her. "Félix," she said, "I may have treated you badly. I may often have caused you suffering by letting you hope for joys from which I have shrunk; but do I not owe it to the courage of the wife and mother to die at peace with all? So

MME. DE MORTSAUF TO FÉLIX

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you too must forgive me, you who so often reproached me, and whose injustice gave me pleasure!"

The Abbé Birotteau put a finger to his lips. At this gesture, the dying woman bowed her head, a faintness came upon her, she moved her hands so as to have the clergy, her children and her servants admitted; then, with an imperious gesture, she showed me the brokenhearted count and her prostrated children. The prospect of this father, whose secret insanity we alone knew, becoming the guardian of these extremely delicate creatures, inspired her with mute entreaties which sank into my soul like sacred fire. Before receiving extreme unction, she asked her servants to pardon her for having been sometimes hasty with them; she implored their prayers, and commended each one individually to the count; she nobly acknowledged that during the past month she had uttered somewhat unchristian complaints which might have shocked her servants; she had repulsed her children, she had entertained feelings that were not very seemly; but she attributed this lack of submission to God's will, to her intolerable sufferings. Finally, with a touching burst of affection, she publicly thanked the Abbé Birotteau for having pointed out to her the nothingness of human things. When she had ceased speaking, prayers began; then the curé of Saché gave her the viaticum. A few moments after, her breathing became impeded, a cloud spread over her eyes, which soon opened again: she gave me a last

glance, and died before us all, perhaps hearing our united sobs. Just as she breathed her last sigh, the last suffering of a life that had been one long suffering, I felt a blow within me which paralyzed all my faculties. The count and I remained all night beside the deathbed with the two abbés and the curé, watching, by the light of the tapers, the dead woman stretched out upon her mattress; untroubled now, where she had suffered so much.

It was my first communication with the dead. All that night I remained with my eyes fixed upon Henriette, fascinated by the pure expression which comes from the lull in all storms, by the whiteness of the face which I endowed once more with its innumerable qualities, but which no longer responded to my love. What majesty in this silence and cold! how many thoughts did it not express? What beauty in this absolute repose, what despotism in this immobility! all the past is in it, and the beginning of the future. Ah! I loved her dead, as much as I loved her living. At dawn the count went to bed, the three priests, tired out, fell asleep at this languid hour, so familiar to those who watch. Then, I was able, unwitnessed, to kiss her forehead with all the love that she had never allowed me to express.

*

The third day, on a cool autumn morning, we accompanied the countess to her last resting-place. She was carried by the old groom, the two Martineaus and Manette's husband. We went down by the road that I had so gayly ascended on the day that I found her again; we crossed the valley of the Indre to reach the little cemetery of Saché; a humble village cemetery, situated on the other side of the church, on the crest of a hill, and where, with Christian humility, she wished to be buried with a simple black wooden cross, like a poor woman of the fields, she had said. When, in the middle of the valley, I saw the town church and the situation of the cemetery, I was seized with a convulsive shiver. Alas! in all our lives there is a Golgotha where we leave our first thirty-three years, with the thrust of a spear in our hearts, and feeling the crown of thorns upon our heads instead of the wreath of roses; this hill was to be my mount of expiation. We were followed by an immense crowd, gathered together to show the regrets of this valley where she had silently interred a multitude of good actions. We heard from Manette, her con-

fidante, that, in order to help the poor, she economized in her dress, whenever her savings were not sufficient. There were naked children clothed, layettes provided, mothers relieved, sacks of corn for the helpless aged in winter, for which the millers were paid by her, a cow given to some poor household, in short, the deeds of a Christian woman, the mother and the lady of the manor ; then dowries offered opportunely to unite couples who loved each other, and substitutions paid for young men whose lot had been drawn, touching offerings of the loving woman who said : *The happiness of others is the consolation of those who can never be happy again.* These things, related at all the vigils of the last three days, had made the crowd enormous. I was walking behind the coffin with Jacques and the two abbés. According to custom, neither Madeleine nor the count were with us, they stayed alone at Clochegourde. Manette absolutely insisted upon going.

"Poor madame! poor madame! now she is happy," I heard at different intervals through her sobs.

Just as the procession left the causeway of the mills, there was a universal moan mingled with tears which made one think that the valley was bewailing its soul. The church was full of people. After the service, we went to the cemetery where she was to be buried close to the crucifix. When I heard the stones and gravel rattling upon the coffin, my courage forsook me, I staggered, I begged the two Martineaus to hold me up, and they led me,

deathlike, to the château of Saché; the owners politely offered me shelter, which I accepted. I acknowledge, I did not at all want to return to Clochegourde, and I felt reluctant to find myself again at Frapesle, whence I could see Henriette's castle. Here, I was near her. I stayed several days in a room the windows of which looked out upon this quiet, solitary vale of which I have told you. It is a vast ridge of ground bordered by oak-trees two hundred years old, and where during heavy rains a torrent flows. This view suited the stern and solemn meditation to which I wished to devote myself. During the day which followed the fatal night, I had seen how inconvenient my presence would be at Clochegourde. The count had undergone violent emotion at Henriette's death, but he was expecting this terrible event, and in the depths of his mind there was an acquiescence which was almost like indifference. I had noticed it several times, and, when the prostrate countess handed me that letter that I dared not open, when she spoke of her affection for me, this suspicious man did not give me the withering look I had expected. He had attributed Henriette's words to the excessive delicacy of the conscience he knew to be so pure. This egotistical obtuseness was natural. The souls of these two beings had been no more united than their bodies, they had never had any of that unbroken intercourse which revives sentiment; they had never exchanged either pains or pleasures, those strong links which bruise us in a thousand parts

when they break, because they touch all our fibres, because they have attached themselves in the recesses of our hearts, at the same time that they have fostered the spirit that sanctioned each one of these links. Madeleine's enmity shut me out from Clochegourde. This hard young girl was not inclined to compound with her hatred, over her mother's coffin, and I should have felt terribly uncomfortable between the count, who would have talked of himself, and the mistress of the house, who would have shown me unconquerable aversion. To be thus, there where the flowers themselves used to be caressing, where the steps of the perrons were eloquent, where all my memories clothed the balconies, the kerb-stones, the balustrades and terraces, the trees and the views, with poetry; to be hated there where all used to love me: I could not bear the thought. And so, from the outset, my decision was taken. Alas! such then was the end of the most intense love that ever came to the heart of man. In the eyes of strangers, my behavior would appear reprehensible, but it had the approval of my conscience. Such is the way in which the best feelings and the greatest tragedies of youth come to an end. We nearly all set out in the morning, as I did from Tours for Clochegourde, taking possession of the world, our hearts starving for love; then, when our riches have passed the test, when we have been mixed up with men and events, everything gradually shrinks, and we find but little gold amidst a great many ashes.

Such is life! life as it is: great pretensions, trivial realities. I thought a long time about myself, wondering what I was to do after a blow that had mown down all my flowers. I resolved to fling myself into politics and science, into the tortuous paths of ambition, to drive woman out of my life and to become a statesman, cold and passionless, to remain faithful to the saint I had loved. My meditations wandered at random, whilst my eyes remained fixed upon the magnificent tapestry of the gilded oaks, with the stern crests, and the feet of bronze; I was wondering whether Henriette's virtue had not been ignorance, whether I was indeed guilty of her death. I was struggling in the midst of my remorse. Finally, on a mild autumn noon, one of the sky's dying smiles, so beautiful in Touraine, I read her letter, which, according to her request, I was not to open until after her death. Imagine my impressions as I read it!

LETTER FROM MADAME DE MORTSAUF TO THE VICOMTE FÉLIX DE VANDENESSE.

"Félix, too well-beloved friend, I must now open my heart to you, not so much to show you how much I love you, as to show you the magnitude of your obligations by disclosing to you the depth and gravity of the wounds that you have made in it. Just as I fall, tired out with the fatigues of the journey, exhausted by the blows received during the struggle, the woman happily is dead, the mother

only survives. You will see, dear, how you were the first cause of all my misfortunes. If later on I offered myself complaisantly to your attacks, to-day I am dying, struck by a final injury from you; but there is exceeding pleasure in feeling one's self crushed by him one loves. Pain will doubtless soon deprive me of my strength, so I take advantage of the last gleams of my intelligence to beg you once more to replace beside my children the heart you have bereaved them of. I should impose this charge upon you with authority did I love you less; but I prefer to let you undertake it of your own accord, as the result of a holy repentance, and also as a continuance of your love: was not our love constantly mingled with penitent meditations and expiatory fears? And, I know, we love each other still. Your fault is not so fatal through you as through the resonance I have permitted it within myself. Did I not tell you I was jealous, but jealous unto death? Well, I am dying. And yet, take comfort: we have complied with human laws. The Church, by one of its purest voices, has told me that God will be merciful to those who have sacrificed their natural inclinations to His commandments. My beloved, then hear it all, for I do not want you to be ignorant of a single thought. What I confide to God in my last moments, you too should know,—you the king of my heart, as He is King of Heaven. Until that fête given to the Duc d'Angoulême, the only one at which I was present, marriage had left me in the ignorance which gives

angelic beauty to the souls of young girls. I was a mother, it is true; but love had not encompassed me with its lawful pleasures. How was it I had remained like this? I do not know; neither do I know by what laws all within me was changed in one instant. Do you still remember your kisses? They have dominated my life, they have furrowed my soul; the ardor of your blood awoke the ardor of mine; your youth penetrated my youth, your desires entered into my heart. When I got up so proudly, I was experiencing a sensation for which I know no word in any tongue, for children have not yet found speech to express the union of the light and their eyes, nor the kiss of life upon their lips. Yes, it was indeed sound reaching echo, light flung upon the gloom, animation given to the universe, at any rate, it was as swift as all these things; but much better, for it was the life of the soul! I understood that a mysterious something existed for me in the world, a force far better than thought, it was all the thoughts, all the forces, a whole future in a joint emotion. I felt that I was but half a mother. In falling upon my heart, this thunderbolt set fire to the desires that were slumbering unknown to me; I suddenly divined all that my aunt meant when she used to kiss me on the forehead, crying: *Poor Henriette!* Upon returning to Clochegourde, the spring, the early leaves, the scent of the flowers, the pretty white clouds, the Indre, the sky, all spoke a hitherto unknown language, that produced upon my mind a little of the ex-

citement you had imparted to my senses. If you have forgotten those terrible kisses, I have never been able to efface them from my memory: they are killing me! Yes, each time that I have seen you since, you revived the impress of them; I was stirred from head to foot at the sight of you, by the mere presentiment of your coming. Neither time nor my firm will have been able to quell this uncontrollable delight. I used to wonder involuntarily: 'What must pleasure be?' Our interchanged looks, the respectful kisses you bestowed upon my hands, my arm placed in yours, your voice in its tones of tenderness, in short, the least things stirred me so violently, that a dimness nearly always came over my eyes: the rush of the rebellious senses then filled my ears. Ah! if in those moments when I redoubled my coldness, you had taken me in your arms, I should have died of happiness. I have sometimes longed for some violence on your part, but prayer would promptly chase away this evil thought. Your name uttered by the children used to fill my heart with a hotter blood which immediately colored my face, and I would lay traps for my poor Madeleine to make her speak it, so much did I love the tumults of this sensation. How can I tell you? your writing had a charm, I gazed at your letters as one contemplates a portrait.

"If, from the first day, you had already acquired I know not what fatal power over me, you will understand, my darling, that it became infinite when I was permitted to read your soul. How overflowing

with delight I was at finding you so pure, so absolutely true, gifted with such fine qualities, capable of such great things, and already so experienced! Man and child, timid and brave! What joy when I found us both consecrated by common sufferings! Since that evening when we confided in each other, to lose you meant death to me: and so I kept you by me out of selfishness. Monsieur de la Berge's conviction of the death that would result to me from your departure touched him deeply, for he saw into my soul. He deemed me necessary to my children, to the count: he did not order me to deny you admittance into my house, for I promised him I would remain pure in deed and thought: 'Thought is involuntary,' he said, 'but it can be guarded in the midst of torture.'—'If I think,' I replied, 'all is lost; save me from myself. Make it so that he can remain with me, and that I may continue pure!' The good old man, although very strict, was then indulgent to so much good faith. 'You may love him as one loves a son, by destining him for your daughter,' he said. I bravely accepted a life of suffering so as not to lose you; and I suffered gladly at seeing that we were both fastened to the same yoke. My God! I remained neutral, faithful to my husband, not allowing you to take a single step, Félix, in your own kingdom. The magnitude of my passions has reacted on my faculties, I have regarded the torments inflicted upon me by Monsieur de Mortsauf as expiations, and I endured them with pride so as to do violence to my

guilty inclinations. Formerly, I was disposed to murmur; but since you have been near me, I have recovered some cheerfulness, by which Monsieur de Mortsauf has benefited. But for the strength you lent me, I should have succumbed long since to the home life of which I told you. If you have had much to do with my shortcomings, you have had much to do with the exercise of my duties. It was the same with my children. I thought I had deprived them of something, and feared lest I should never be able to do enough for them. From that time, my life has been one continual sorrow that I loved. At feeling that I was less of a mother, less of an honest woman, remorse has taken up its abode in my heart; and, fearing to fail in my obligations I have constantly tried to go beyond them. To avoid backsliding, I therefore put Madeleine between you and myself, and I destined you for each other, thus raising barriers between us two. Ineffectual barriers! nothing could stifle the thrills you caused me. Absent or present, you had the same power. I have preferred Madeleine to Jacques, because Madeleine was to belong to you. But I did not give you up to my daughter without a struggle. I said to myself that I was only twenty-eight when I met you, that you were almost twenty-two; I lessened the gap, I yielded to false hopes. Oh! my God! Félix, I make these confessions to you so as to spare you remorse, also perhaps to show you that I was not insensible, that our sufferings of love were cruelly alike, and that Arabella had no superiority over me. I too was

one of those daughters of the fallen race that men love so well. There was a time when the struggle was so awful, that I used to cry all night long; my hair fell out. You had that hair! You remember Monsieur de Mortsauf's illness. Your grandeur of soul at that time, far from exalting me, only abased me. Alas! from that day, I longed to give myself to you as a reward due to so much heroism; but this madness did not last long. I laid it at the feet of God during the Mass at which you refused to be present. Jacques's illness and Madeleine's sufferings have seemed to me to be the threats of God, who was forcibly drawing the wandering sheep to Himself. Then your very natural love for this Englishwoman revealed secrets to me that I myself was unconscious of. I loved you more than I thought I did. Madeleine was effaced. The ceaseless emotions of my stormy life, the efforts that I made to overcome myself with no other help than that of religion, have all paved the way for the malady of which I am dying. This terrible blow has determined the attacks about which I have kept silence. I saw in death the only possible ending to this secret tragedy. There was a whole lifetime of passion, jealousy and fury, during the two months that elapsed between the news that my mother gave me of your connection with Lady Dudley, and your arrival. I longed to go to Paris, I was thirsting to kill, I longed for this woman's death, I was indifferent to my children's caresses. Prayer, which had hitherto been as balm, had no effect upon my soul. Jealousy has made the

great breach by which death has entered. Nevertheless I always kept an unruffled brow. Yes, this period of warfare was a secret between God and myself. When I really knew that I was loved as much as I loved you, and that I had been betrayed by nature only and not by intention, I wanted to live—and it was too late. God had placed me under His protection, His pity, no doubt, was aroused for a creature who was true to herself, true to Him, and whose sufferings had often led her to the gates of the sanctuary. My well-beloved, God has judged me, Monsieur de Mortsauf will no doubt forgive me; but you, would you be merciful? Would you listen to the voice which comes now from my grave? Would you repair the misfortunes of which we are equally guilty, you less than me perhaps? You know what I want to ask you. Be to Monsieur de Mortsauf as a Sister of Charity to a sick person, listen to him, love him; no one will love him. Interpose between him and his children as I used to do. Your task will not last long; Jacques will soon be leaving home for Paris to be with his grandfather, and you have promised me to guide him through the perils of this world. As to Madeleine, she will marry; if you might only please her one day! she is myself all over, and, more than that, she is strong, she has that will in which I have been lacking, that energy necessary to the companion of a man who is destined by his career to the storms of political life, she is shrewd and penetrating. Should your destinies be united, she will be happier than was her mother.

By thus acquiring the right to carry on my work at Clochegourde, you will wipe away faults that will not have been sufficiently atoned for, although pardoned in Heaven and upon earth, for *he* is generous and will forgive me. You see, I am always selfish; but is it not the proof of an all-absorbing love? I want to be loved by you in my family. Not having been able to belong to you, I leave you my thoughts and my duties! If you love me too much to obey me, if you will not marry Madeleine, at least you will watch over the repose of my soul by making Monsieur de Mortsauf as happy as he can be.

"Farewell, dear child of my heart! this is the completely intelligent farewell, as yet full of life, the farewell of a soul upon which you have shed too many great joys for you to have the least remorse for the catastrophe they have brought about; I make use of this word in remembering that you love me, for, I, I am reaching the place of rest, a sacrifice to duty, and, what makes me shiver, not without regret! God knows better than I do whether I have practised His holy laws according to their spirit. No doubt I have often stumbled, but I have not fallen, and the most powerful excuse for my sin is in the very magnitude of the seductions which encircled me. The Saviour will behold me as trembling as if I had succumbed. Good-bye once more, a good-bye like that which I said yesterday to our beautiful valley, in whose bosom I shall soon be resting, and which you will often revisit, will you not?

"HENRIETTE."

I fell into an abyss of reflection upon discovering the unknown depths of this life, now illumined by this final flame. The clouds of my egotism were dispelled. So she had suffered as much as I, more than I, for she was dead. She believed that others ought to be kind to her lover; she had been so thoroughly blinded by her love, that she had not suspected her daughter's ill-will. This last proof of her fondness troubled me greatly. Poor Henriette, who wanted to give me Clochegourde and her daughter!

Natalie, since that ever terrible day upon which I first entered a cemetery to accompany the remains of this noble Henriette, whom you now know, the sun has been less warm and less luminous, the night darker, life less active, and thought much slower. There are people whom we bury in the ground, but there are some more particularly beloved whose shroud is our heart, whose memory mingles every day with its beats; we think of them as we breathe, they are in us by means of the mild law of a transmutation peculiar to love. A soul is within my soul. Whenever I do some good, whenever I say a kind word, this soul speaks, it acts; all that I may have of good in me emanates from this tomb, just as the fragrance of a lily scents the air. Mockery, evil, all that you disapprove of in me comes from myself. Now, when my eyes are darkened by a cloud and stray toward Heaven, after having gazed long upon the ground, when my lips do not answer your words and your attentions, never ask me: *What are you thinking of?*

Dear Natalie, I have stopped writing for some time; these memories stirred me too deeply. Now, I must tell you the story of the events which followed this calamity, and which requires but few words. When a life consists of nothing but action and movement, all is soon told; but, when it passes into the loftiest regions of the soul, its history is diffuse. Henriette's letter brought a gleam of hope before my eyes. Out of this great wreck I saw one island upon which I might alight. To live at Clochegourde near Madeleine, devoting my life to her, was a course which complied with all the ideas that were agitating my heart; but it was necessary to find out Madeleine's real opinion. I had to go and say goodbye to the count; so I went to Clochegourde to see him, and met him on the terrace. We walked up and down a long time. At first, he spoke of the countess as a man who realized the extent of his loss and all the havoc it had wrought in his home life. But, after the first outcry of sorrow, he seemed to be more engrossed in the future than the present. He was afraid of his daughter, who, he said, had not her mother's gentleness. The resolute character of Madeleine, in whom an indescribable heroism was mingled with her mother's gracious qualities, terrified this old man, accustomed to Henriette's tenderness, and who anticipated a will that nothing could bend. But if anything could console him for this irreparable loss, it was the certainty of soon rejoining his wife: the emotions and griefs of these last few days had increased his unhealthy condition,

and revived his old pains; the struggle which was brewing between his parental authority and that of his daughter, who was becoming the mistress of the house, was going to end his days in bitterness; for where he had been able to fight against his wife, he would always have to yield to his child. And then, his son would go away, his daughter would marry; what sort of son-in-law would he have? Although he spoke of dying immediately, he felt himself alone, without sympathy, for a long time to come.

During this hour, in which he talked of nothing but himself, asking me to befriend him in the name of his wife, he drew me the finishing stroke in the grand figure of the Émigré, one of the most imposing types of our period. He was apparently feeble and broken down, but it seemed as if life were bound to go on persisting in him just because of his sober habits and rural occupations. As I write this, he is still alive.

Although Madeleine could see us going along the terrace, she did not come down; she came forward on the steps and reëntered the house several times, so as to show me her disdain. I took advantage of the moment she came out upon the perron, and I begged the count to walk up to the château; I wished to speak to Madeleine, I alleged a last wish that the countess had confided to me, I had no other means of seeing her; the count went to fetch her and left us alone on the terrace.

"Dear Madeleine," I said, "if I must speak to you, was it not here that your mother listened to me when she had to complain, not so much of me as of

the events of life? I know your thoughts, but are you not condemning me without knowing the facts? My life and happiness are bound up in this spot, you know that, and you drive me away by the coldness that you show in the place of the brotherly affection that united us, and that death has tightened by the link of the same sorrow. Dear Madeleine, you for whom I would lay down my life this instant without any hope of reward, without your knowing it even, so much do we love the children of those who have protected us through life, you do not know the plan entertained by your adorable mother these last seven years, and which would doubtless modify your sentiments; but I do not want these advantages. All that I beg of you is not to deprive me of the right to come and breathe the air of this terrace, and to wait until time shall have altered your ideas about social life; just now, I would take great care not to clash with them; I respect a sorrow that distracts you, for it robs me too of the faculty of clearly judging the circumstances in which I find myself. The saint who is now watching over us would approve of the reticence I observe, whilst praying you only to remain neutral betwixt your feelings and me. I love you too much, in spite of the aversion you show me, to tell the count of a plan he would embrace with ardor. Be free. Later on, remember that you will never know anyone in the world better than you know me, that no other man's heart will be fuller of more devoted sentiments—"

Until now, Madeleine had been listening to me with downcast eyes, but she stopped me by a gesture.

"Monsieur,' she said in a voice trembling with emotion, "I, too, know all your thoughts; but my feelings will never change in regard to you, and I would rather throw myself into the Indre than be united to you. I will not speak about myself; but, if my mother's name still has any influence over you, it is in her name I beg you never to come to Clochegourde as long as I am here. The mere sight of you causes me a distress that I cannot express, and that I shall never overcome."

She bowed to me with a motion full of dignity, and went up again toward Clochegourde, without turning round, as impassive as her mother was one day, but pitiless. Although tardily, this young girl's sharp eye had divined all in her mother's heart, and it may be that her repugnance to a man who seemed baneful to her had been augmented by some regret at her own innocent complicity. Here all was chaos. Madeleine hated me, refusing to explain whether I was the cause or the victim of these misfortunes; perhaps she would have hated us both alike, her mother and me, had we been happy. Thus all was destroyed in the fine edifice of my happiness. I alone was to know the life of this great, unknown woman in its entirety, I alone had read her soul in its full extent; neither her mother, nor father, nor husband, nor children had known her. Strange! I ransack this heap of ashes and de-

light in spreading them out before you; we may all find something of our most valuable chances in it. How many families also have their Henriette! how many noble beings leave this earth without having met an intelligent historian who will have sounded their hearts, who will have gauged their depth and strength! This is human life in all its truth: mothers often do not know their children any better than their children know them; it is the same with husbands, lovers and brothers! How could I tell, I, that one day, even over my father's coffin, I should plead with Charles de Vandenesse, with my brother, to whose advancement I had contributed so much? Heavens! how much instruction in the very simplest story!

When Madeleine had disappeared through the door of the perron, I returned, broken-hearted, to say good-bye to my hosts, and I left for Paris, following the right bank of the Indre, by which I had come into this valley the first time. I passed sadly through the pretty village of Pont-de-Ruan. And yet I was rich, political life was smiling upon me, I was no longer the weary pedestrian of 1814. At that time, my heart had been full of desire; now, my eyes were full of tears; then, I had my life to fill; now, I felt it empty. I was very young, twenty-nine years old, my heart was already withered. A few years had sufficed to strip this scene of its early splendors and to sicken me of life. Now you can understand my emotion when, upon turning round, I saw Madeleine on the terrace.

Governed by uncontrollable sadness, I thought no more of the purpose of my journey. Lady Dudley must indeed have been far from my mind, that I should have entered her courtyard without knowing it. Once the blunder committed, it had to be carried through. In her house my habits had been conjugal, and I went up feeling sorry in thinking of all the vexations of a rupture. If you have thoroughly understood Lady Dudley's character and ways, you will be able to imagine my discomfiture when her butler ushered me, in travelling attire, into a salon where I found her gorgeously dressed, surrounded by five persons. Lord Dudley, one of the most eminent old statesmen of England, was standing up in front of the fireplace, stiff, full of conceit, cold, with the sneering air he must have worn in Parliament ; he smiled upon hearing my name. Arabella's two children, who were amazingly like De Marsay, one of the old milord's natural sons, who was there on the settee beside the marchioness, were near their mother. Arabella, upon seeing me, immediately assumed a haughty expression, and fixed her eyes upon my travelling cap, as if she would have liked to ask me every moment what I wanted in her house. She stared at me as she would have done at a country gentleman who might have been presented to her. As to our intimacy, that eternal passion, those protestations of dying if I ceased to love her, that Armidean phantasmagoria, all had vanished like a dream. I had never squeezed her hand, I was a stranger, she did

not know me. In spite of the diplomatic composure to which I was beginning to get accustomed, I was surprised, and any one else would have been the same in my place. De Marsay was smiling at his boots, which he was examining with strange affectation. My mind was soon made up. From any other woman, I should have taken a rebuff quietly; but, exasperated at seeing the heroine who wanted to die of love, and who had mocked at death, unabashed, I determined to confront insolence with insolence. She knew of Lady Brandon's disaster; to remind her of it, was to deal her a stab in the heart, although the weapon was bound to be blunted by it.

"Madame," I said, "you will forgive me for coming in so unceremoniously, when you hear that I come from Touraine, and that Lady Brandon has charged me with a message for you which will brook no delay. I feared to find that you had left for Lancashire; but, since you are to remain in Paris, I will await your commands and the hour at which you will deign to receive me."

She bent her head and I went out. From that day, I have never met her except in society, where we exchange a friendly greeting and sometimes an epigram. I talk to her of the inconsolable Lancashire women, she talks to me of the Frenchwomen who do credit to their despair by their stomachic diseases. Thanks to her exertions, I have a deadly enemy in De Marsay, whom she is very fond of. And I, I say she married the two generations. So

my disaster fell short in no respect. I carried out the plan that I had determined upon during my retreat at Saché. I threw myself into work, I applied myself to science, literature and politics; I took up diplomacy upon the accession of Charles X. who suppressed the office that I had held under the late king. From that moment, I resolved never to pay attention to any woman, no matter how beautiful, how clever, how sympathetic she might be. This decision answered my purpose admirably; I acquired an incredible peace of mind, a strong power for work, and I realized how much of our lives these women waste, thinking they have repaid us by a few gracious words. But all my resolutions came to nothing: you know how and why.

Dear Natalie, in telling you my life unreservedly and frankly, just as I would tell it to myself; in recounting feelings in which you were in no way concerned, I may perhaps have chafed some inner recess of your jealous and sensitive heart; but what might irritate an ordinary woman will, I am sure, be to you an additional reason for loving me. With souls that are suffering and sick, the best women have a sublime rôle to play, that of the Sister of Mercy who dresses the wounds, that of the mother who forgives the child. Artists and great poets are not the only ones to suffer: the men who live for their country, for the future of nations, by enlarging their circle of passions and ideas, often create a very cruel solitude for themselves. They need to feel a pure, devoted love beside them; be sure they

know its grandeur and its worth. To-morrow I shall know whether I have been mistaken in loving you.

TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE FELIX DE VANDENESSE

"DEAR COUNT,—

"You received from this poor Madame de Mortsauf a letter, which, you say, has not been unprofitable in guiding you through the world, a letter to which you owe your great success. Permit me to complete your education. For mercy's sake, get rid of a detestable habit; do not imitate those widows who are always talking of their first husband, who always fling the virtues of the deceased in the face of the second. I am French, dear count; I should wish to marry all of the man I loved, and I could not, really, marry Madame de Mortsauf. After having read your story with the attention it merits, and you know what interest I take in you, it has seemed to me that you bored Lady Dudley considerably by confronting her with Madame de Mortsauf's perfections, and behaved very badly to the countess by overwhelming her with the resources of English love. You have been wanting in tact with me, a poor creature, who has no other merit than that of pleasing you; you have given me to understand that I loved you neither like Henriette, nor like Arabella. I admit my shortcomings, I know them; but why make me so painfully conscious of them? Do you know whom I pity? The fourth woman that you will love. She will necessarily be

obliged to struggle against three persons ; I should also warn you, in your own interests as well as hers, against the danger of your memory. I renounce the onerous glory of loving you : it would need too many Catholic or Anglican qualities, and I do not care for fighting phantoms. The virtues of the Virgin of Clochegourde would dishearten the most self-confident woman, and your intrepid Amazon discourages the boldest desires of happiness. Whatever she might do, a woman could never hope to give you delights equal to her ambition. Neither the heart nor the senses could triumph over your memories. You have forgotten that we often ride on horseback. I have not known how to rekindle the sun that was chilled by the death of your Saint Henriette, you would shiver beside me. My friend—for you will always be my friend,—take care that you do not renew such confidences, which expose your disenchantment, discourage love and drive a woman to diffidence of herself. Love, dear count, lives only upon faith. The woman who, before speaking a word, or mounting her horse, wonders whether a celestial Henriette would not talk better, or whether an equestrian like Arabella would not display more grace, that woman, depend upon it, would have trembling legs and tongue. You aroused my desire to receive a few of your intoxicating bouquets, but you do not make up any more of them. It is the same with a host of things that you dare not do any more, thoughts and pleasures that can never live again for you. No woman, rest assured, would wish to jostle the dead

woman that you keep in your heart. You beg me to love you out of Christian charity. I admit, I can do an infinity of things through charity, all, save love.

"You are sometimes boring and bored, you call your sadness by the name of melancholy: well and good: but you are insufferable and you give cruel anxiety to her who loves you. I have too often encountered the Saint's tomb between us; I have reflected, I know myself and I do not want to die like her. If you wearied Lady Dudley, who is an extremely superior woman, I, who have not her furious desires, I am afraid of growing cold even sooner than she did. Let us do away with love between us, since you can never taste the happiness of it again save with the dead, and let us remain friends, I am willing. Why, dear count, you started with an adorable woman, a perfect mistress who thought of your success, who gave you the peerage, who loved you enthusiastically, who only asked you to be faithful, and you made her die of grief! but I never heard of anything so monstrous. Among all the most ardent and the most unfortunate young men who drag their ambitions on the Paris pavement, which of them would not be steady for ten years to obtain half the favors that you did not know how to requite? When one is loved like this, what more can one ask for?

"Poor woman! she has indeed suffered, and, when you have composed a few sentimental phrases, you think yourself quits with her coffin. Such no doubt is the reward that awaits my affection

for you. Thanks, dear count, I will have no rival either beyond or on this side of the grave. When one has such crimes upon one's conscience, at least one should not tell them. I made you an indiscreet request; I was in my rôle of woman, daughter of Eve; yours consisted in calculating the import of your reply. You should have deceived me; later, I should have thanked you. Have you then never understood the virtue of men of gallantry? Do you not realize how generous they are in swearing to us that they have never loved, that they love for the first time? Your programme is impracticable. To be both Madame de Mortsauf and Lady Dudley,—why, my friend, is not that trying to unite fire and water? Then you do not know women? they are what they are, they are bound to have the faults of their qualities. You met Lady Dudley too soon to be able to appreciate her, and the ill you say of her seems to me to be the revenge of your wounded vanity; you understood Madame de Mortsauf too late, you punished the one for not being the other; what will happen to me, I who am neither the one nor the other?

"I love you sufficiently to have deeply reflected upon your future, for I really love you very much. Your air of the Knight of the Rueful Countenance has always profoundly interested me; I believed in the constancy of melancholy men; but I did not know that you had killed the most beautiful and the most virtuous of women upon your entry into society. Well, I have wondered what remains for you to do:

I have thought it well over. I think, my friend, that you must marry some Mrs. Shandy, who will know nothing about love or passion, who will not worry about either Lady Dudley or Madame de Mortsauf, very indifferent to those moments of boredom that you call melancholy, in which you are about as amusing as the rain, and who will be that worthy Sister of Mercy that you ask for. As to loving, thrilling at a word, knowing how to wait upon happiness, to bestow it, to receive it, to feel the thousand storms of passion, as to espousing the petty vanities of a loved woman, my dear count, give it up. You have too well followed the advice that your good angel gave you about young women; you have so avoided them, that you do not know them at all. Madame de Mortsauf was right to estimate you highly from the outset: all women would have been against you, and you would have come to nothing. It is too late now to begin your studies, to learn to tell us what we love to hear, to be appropriately magnanimous, to adore our pettinesses when it pleases us to be petty. We are not as silly as you think: when we love, we place the man of our choice above everything. Whatever shakes our faith in our superiority, shakes our love. In flattering us, you flatter yourselves. If you are desirous of remaining in society, of enjoying the acquaintance of women, carefully hide from them all that you have told me: they like neither to scatter the flowers of their love upon rocks, nor to waste their caresses in healing an ailing heart. All women

would find out the barrenness of your heart, and you would always be unhappy. Very few of them would be frank enough to tell you what I tell you, or sufficiently good-natured to resign you without ill-will in offering you their friendship, as does to-day she who signs herself your devoted friend,

"NATALIE DE MANERVILLE."

PARIS, OCTOBER, 1835.

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